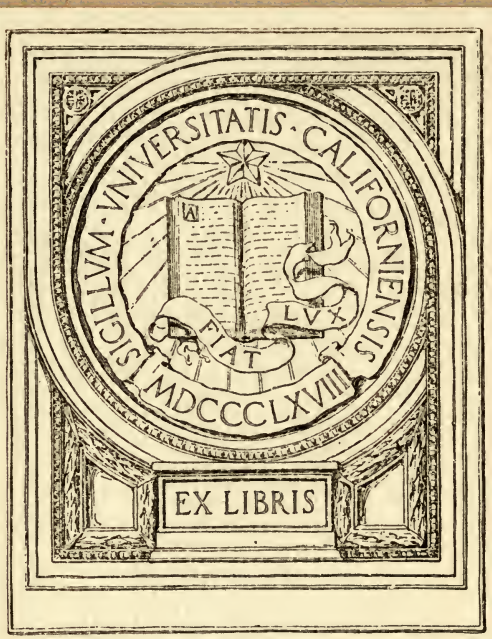
MASKS
AND OTHER
ONE-ACT PLAYS

GEORGE MIDDLETON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GEORGE MIDDLETON

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(For critical comments see back pages of this volume)

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

MASKS

WITH

JIM'S BEAST, TIDES, AMONG THE LIONS, THE REASON, THE HOUSE

ONE-ACT PLAYS OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE

BY

GEORGE MIDDLETON

"We all wear many masks"

NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1920

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GEORGE MIDDLETON

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To

GARDNER and MARICE

SOUVENIR OF HAPPY DAYS IN THE FOREST
WHERE MUCH OF THIS WAS WRITTEN

419765

In the prefaces to my five previous volumes I have sufficiently explained my reason for play publication—not as a substitute for production but as an alternative sometimes compelled by the exigencies of a highly commercialized theater. Further, I have stated in other places why I have so frequently turned to the one-act form.

The present volume is dedicated to no thesis, though perhaps the title may offer some hint of the underlying motive which has prompted this series.

G. M.

December 23, 1919.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
MASKS	3
JIM'S BEAST	67
TIDES	113
AMONG THE LIONS	149
THE REASON	181
THE HOUSE	211

MASKS

THE PEOPLE

GRANT WILLIAMS, *a dramatist.*
JERRY, *his wife.*

TOM ROBINSON, *a great painter.*
MARIE CASE, *formerly Tom's wife.*

Characters in his unproduced drama "The Lonely Way."

SCENE

In the WILLIAMS' *flat, New York City, after the second performance of* GRANT WILLIAMS' *first great success,* THE SAND BAR, *produced at the National Theater.*

MASKS *

THE doorway from the public stairs opens immediately upon the living-room without the intervening privacy of a small hallway. The room was, no doubt, more formally pretentious in the early days of the WILLIAMS' *marriage; but the relics of that time—some rigid mahogany chairs and stray pieces of staid furniture—have been ruthlessly pushed against the walls, so that one perceives a "parlor" transformed into a miscellaneous room upon which the flat's overflow has gradually crept. And with this has come* GRANT WILLIAMS' *plain wooden work-table, bearing now a writer's accessories, a desk lamp, and a mass of manuscripts; one of which is his unproduced drama,* THE LONELY WAY, *bound in the conventional blue linen cover. His well-worn typewriter is perched on the end of the table, in easy reach of his work-chair with its sofa cushions crushed and shaped to his form. Another chair is near by, so that it also may catch the flood of light which comes from the conventional electric bunch-light above. There is a small black kerosene heater to be used in those emergencies of temperature which landlords create. Not far from it, a child's collapsible go-cart is propped. On the walls, above some over-flowing bookshelves, are*

* Copyright by George Middleton. See back of title page.

several tastefully selected etchings. A window in back, which hides an airshaft, is partly concealed by heavy curtains that hang tired and limp. There is another doorway, directly opposite the entrance, which leads to the other rooms of a characteristically compressed city flat.

Yet the room is not forbidding: it merely suggests forced economies that have not quite fringed poverty: continual adaptation, as it were, to the financial contingencies of a marriage that has just managed to make both ends meet.

When the curtain rises JERRY WILLIAMS *is seated in the cozy chair reading a number of newspaper clippings.*

JERRY *is an attractive woman in her thirties. Externally, there is nothing particularly striking about her: if there be such a thing as an average wife* JERRY *personifies it. She has loved her husband and kept house for him without a spoken protest; for she has had no advanced ideas or theories. Yet she has had her fears and little concealments and dreams—like any married woman. She has been sustained through the ten years of hard sledding by the belief in her husband's ultimate financial success. And as she reads the criticisms of his play,* THE SAND BAR, *produced the night before, she realizes it has come at last. She is now completely happy and calm in the thought of her rewards.*

She looks at the cheap watch lying on the desk and indicates it is late. She closes the window, walks over to the doorway and looks in, apparently to see if the

child is still asleep. Then she closes the door and stands there, with just a suspicion of impatience.

Several minutes pass. Then she gives a little cry of joy as she hears the key turn in the lock and she sees the hall door open slowly—admitting her husband.

GRANT WILLIAMS *is a more striking personality than his wife; about forty, with a tinge of iron gray on his temples, he has a strong virile face not without traces of idealism. His whole appearance is normal and devoid of any conscious affectation of dress. But a very close inspection might reveal that his suit, though carefully pressed, is well worn—as is the overcoat which covers it.* GRANT *happens to be a man of cultivation and breeding, with a spark of genius, who has strayed into strange pastures. At present there lurks an unexpected depression back of his mood; perhaps it is only the normal reaction which comes to every artist when success is won and the critical sense within mocks the achievement so beneath the dream. Perhaps with* GRANT WILLIAMS *it is something else.*

JERRY

Oh, Grant, I thought you'd never come home.

GRANT

Best, the house manager, detained me.

JERRY

(*Detecting his mood*)

There's nothing the matter with the play?

GRANT

Nothing; except it's an enormous success. (*She smiles again, and he wants to keep her smiling.*) We were sold out to-night. The second night! Think of that! I had to stand myself.

JERRY

Well, I don't see why you should be blue about it. There were always plenty of empty seats at your other plays. I knew THE SAND BAR couldn't fail.

GRANT

(*Throwing coat carelessly over chair*)

You felt the same about the others.

JERRY

(*Trying to cheer him*)

They didn't fail—artistically.

GRANT

You mean nobody came to see them—except on passes. But THE SAND BAR! That's different! (*With a tinge of sarcasm throughout.*) You ought to have seen the way the mob at the National ate it up.

JERRY

I wanted to go but I couldn't ask Mrs. Hale to take care of the baby again. Besides, I was anxious to read all the notices over quietly by myself and . . .

GRANT

(*Picking them up and glancing through them*)

Great, aren't they? Not a "roast" among them.

JERRY

Not one. I couldn't find Arthur Black's review: he was always so kind to your other plays, too.

GRANT

(*Evasively*)

I forgot to bring in the *Gazette*. Best says he never saw such "money" notices. (*Glances at one.*) Doran outdid himself. (*Reading the critic's notice with a touch of theatrical exaggeration.*) "The perception of human nature evinced by Grant Williams in his profoundly moving drama THE SAND BAR places him in the front rank of American dramatists!"

JERRY

Just where you belong.

GRANT

(*Skipping*)

"His hero, Tom Robinson, the artist, who deliberately deserts his highest ideals because his wife's happiness is of more value than his own egoistic self-expression, is a new angle on the much abused artistic temperament." (*With a wise smile.*) That "twist" seems to have got them. (*Reading*) "Marie, his wife, who is willing to risk her honor to test his love and thus awaken him to a sense of his human responsibility,

is a character which will appeal to every married woman."

JERRY

(*She nods in approval, without his seeing her*)

But read the last paragraph, dear.

GRANT

"In fact, all the characters are true to themselves, never once being bent by the playwright for dramatic effect out of the inevitable and resistless momentum of their individual psychologies." And Doran used to report prizefights!

JERRY

I hope he doesn't go back to it. He writes beautifully.

GRANT

By the way, I haven't told you the crowning achievement of my ten years of writing. Trebaro—the great Trebaro who would never even read my plays before—asked me in the lobby to-night to write him a curtain raiser!

JERRY

(*Happily*)

That's splendid!

GRANT

I've promised to get it done in ten days. His new play is going to run short. He's got to have something to lengthen the evening.

JERRY

Have you an idea?

GRANT

No; not yet. But he doesn't like anything with ideas in it.

JERRY

(*As she sees him go to his typewriter to remove cover*)

But, dear, you're not going to begin it to-night! (*Significantly stopping him.*) To-night belongs to me —not to your work. (*Nestling close beside him.*) Dearest. . . .

GRANT

All right, Jerry. I've only got a few paragraphs of personal stuff to bang off. Then I'll be with you. *The Times* wants it for a Sunday story—with my photo. (*As her face brightens again.*) You see, Mrs. Grant Williams, your husband is now in the limelight.

JERRY

I'm so glad success has come to you at last.

GRANT

Better at last than at first. I'm told it's bad for your character to be too successful when you're young. So providence nearly starved us a bit, eh?

JERRY

You thought it was going to be so easy when we were first married. It's been hard for you, dear. I

know. Writing and writing and seeing other fellows make money. But now you've won out. You ought to be very happy, as I am.

GRANT

You are happy, aren't you? (*He takes her hands affectionately, then looks at them, turning them over.*) The only hard thing, Jerry, was to see these hands of yours grow red and rough with the work here.

JERRY

Maybe that's the only way they could help you.

GRANT

(*Enigmatically*)

It's because of them and only because of them that I've done it.

JERRY

Done what?

GRANT

Oh, nothing. (*He puts paper in the machine.*) How about a glass of milk?

JERRY

I'll get it while the great man reveals himself to an anxious public.

GRANT

And some crackers. (*Sitting at machine.*) They want something on: "How I Make My Characters

Live." (*She laughs suddenly: he starts.*) Oh; it's you?

JERRY

Yes. I was thinking how funny it was to celebrate a success in milk.

GRANT

Yes. But the greatest joke of all is that THE SAND BAR *is* a success—a real financial success.

JERRY

It's a very good joke.

(*She goes out happily. Then a cynical look creeps into his face. He reads as he types.*)

GRANT

"How I Made My Characters in THE SAND BAR Live."

(*He pauses a second, smiling cynically. Then, as he apparently hears something, he rises and goes over to the hall door which he opens quickly. He looks out and apparently sees a neighbor entering the apartment opposite. A bibulous "good night" is heard. He closes the door, turns the key, tests the door and sees it is locked. As he stands there puzzled,* JERRY *enters, with a bottle of milk, some crackers, and an apple on a small tray.*)

You'll have to get over this habit of waiting on me now.

JERRY

Don't ask the impossible.

GRANT

But we shall have servants now; plenty of them.

JERRY

Plenty of them? Why how much money are you going to make out of THE SAND BAR?

GRANT

Nearly a thousand dollars a week.

JERRY

(*Almost inaudibly as she nearly drops the tray*)
My God!

GRANT

(*As he puts tray on table*)
It will run forty weeks at the National. Then three road companies next year: "stock" and the "movies" after that. I'm going to make as much money in two weeks now as I ever made before in one year—turning out hack stuff and book reviews. And all I've got to do is to sit back and let it work for me!

JERRY

It doesn't seem honest.

GRANT

Maybe it isn't, Jerry. (*As he eats.*) But when the public is pleased it pays to be pleased.

JERRY
(*Venturing*)
The first thing I want is some new clothes.

GRANT
(*Grandiloquently*)
My first week's royalty is yours.

JERRY
Really?

GRANT
Throw away everything that's darned and patched. I'm sick of seeing them.

JERRY
I was always so ashamed, too. Just think what people would have said if I'd been run over or killed in an accident.

GRANT
Now you'll do the running over—in our new car.

JERRY
(*Hardly believing her ears*)
A car!

GRANT
Every successful playwright has a car.

JERRY
(*Joyfully*)
Then we'll have to move from here to live up to the car?

GRANT

We've got to move. It's more important to look like a success than to be one. (*Glancing about flat.*) And the Lord knows this doesn't look like success.

JERRY

I'm so glad. I've grown to hate these five stuffy rooms without sunlight.

GRANT

Nothing to light them up these ten years but the glow of my genius, eh? Now I'll have a big house to shine in.

JERRY

I've always dreamed of you having a room off by yourself.

GRANT

Where you could really dream without the sound of my typewriter waking you and the baby?

JERRY

But it will be splendid for you, too. I don't see how you ever wrote here with me always fussing in and out.

GRANT

Washing the eternal dish and cooking the eternal chop.

JERRY

I don't ever want to look another gas stove in the face.

GRANT

You've cooked your last chop.

JERRY

Oh, Grant; my dreams have come true.

GRANT

(*Enigmatically again*)

Yes. Success or failure: it's all a matter of how you dream. (*She looks up puzzled: he is silent a moment and then goes to machine again.*) But I'll never get this done.

JERRY

I'll put on my old wrapper, for the last time, and wait up for you. I'm going to get a real négligée tomorrow. Your favorite color.

GRANT

I won't be long. This is an awful bore and I'm tired.

(*He begins to pound out something on his machine.* JERRY *goes over to hang up his coat, and as she does so, a newspaper clipping falls out of his pocket, on the floor. She picks it up unnoticed by* GRANT. *She glances at it; starts angrily to speak to* GRANT *about it; but seeing he is absorbed, hesitates and then conceals it. She hangs up the coat, comes around back of him as though to speak—but changes her mind. She kisses him. As she passes the table, she knocks off the manuscript of a play. She picks it up.*)

GRANT

What's that?

JERRY

The manuscript of THE LONELY WAY. (*He looks over at it, with a cynical smile.*) You've learned a lot about playwrighting since you wrote that, haven't you, dear?

GRANT

Yes—a lot.

JERRY

(*Tentatively*)

You used to say it was the best thing you ever did.

GRANT

How did you happen to come across it?

JERRY

I found it behind the chest when I was cleaning.

GRANT

Oh, yes; I remember. I threw it there the day of my great decision: The day I made up my mind to rewrite it and call it THE SAND BAR.

JERRY

(*As she glances over the pages*)

Grant. I'm not going to lose you now that you're a success?

GRANT

What ever put such a foolish idea in your head?

JERRY

You remember the Tom Robinson you drew in this play? All you made him think of was his art; he even threw away his wife to make a success of it.

GRANT

That was because his wife didn't understand. Besides, dear, you know how much I altered my original conception of their characters and completely changed the plot. Look how different it all is in THE SAND BAR.

JERRY

And you think your changes made the play truer to life? In real life a Tom Robinson wouldn't have got rid of her?

GRANT

I don't think anything's ever going to come between us, if that's what you mean.

JERRY

Of course not. (*Putting the manuscript on table, relieved, as she sees him resume his typing.*) But I felt so sure of you when we were poor. Perhaps it was because you couldn't afford to be wild.

(*She turns off the switch and goes out. The room is lighted only by the desk lamp, casting*

its shadows into the corners of the room. He takes a cigarette from the box on the table, and as he smokes he reads half to himself what he has written.)

GRANT

"An author's characters grow into life out of his observation and experience. Once they are conceived by these two parents their first heart beats are the taps of the author's typewriter." Good. "Gradually they grow into living men and women. They live with him, yet with a life of their own. In writing THE SAND BAR I . . . I . . .

(*This makes him hesitate to continue. He glances toward the manuscript of* THE LONELY WAY. *He rises slowly and picks it up cynically. Then, as though fascinated, he gradually settles in the cozy chair by his table. He begins to become absorbed as he reads his earlier play. He puts his hand over his eyes, he lowers the manuscript, gives a sigh as though lost in the thoughts it calls up. The door, which he has locked, opens noiselessly, and closes as* GRANT *looks up in surprise and sees a man enter.*

GRANT *immediately discovers there is something extraordinary about his unexpected visitor. As he directs the light upon him,* GRANT *perceives the man's power which lies both in his frame and impressive personality. His eyes have a relentless coldness when they narrow. His mouth is firm but cruel, with a sarcastic droop*

pulling down the corners. In spite of an occasional uncouth manner of spasmodically blurting out his words, GRANT *soon realizes how keen is the intruder's penetration when it is sharpened to the one point which vitally concerns him—his art. For this man of fifty-five winters, is a great artist.* GRANT *is too amazed and puzzled to recognize it is one of his own creations:* TOM ROBINSON.

The latter comes over to the dramatist and places a hand on his shoulder.)

TOM

You and I have some scores to settle.

GRANT

(*Moving away*)

Who are you?

TOM

So you don't recognize me?

GRANT

Your manners are familiar.

TOM

So Whistler once said. Look at me closely.

GRANT

Is this a dare?

TOM

(*Shaking his head slowly*)

An author's brain is indeed a store-house of mixed impressions: a strange asylum for me to have escaped from.

GRANT

(*Starting toward door*)

Possibly the police may be able to lead you safely home.

TOM

I am at home with you.

GRANT

Don't get excited. Keep perfectly cool.

TOM

I am cool because my intention is. (GRANT *gives him a look as* TOM *goes over to the machine and glances at the heading of the article.*) "How I Make My Characters Live!" You certainly do—some of us.

(GRANT *suddenly crosses to the door, tries it and realizes it is still locked. He turns, bewildered, to* TOM.)

GRANT

How did you get in here?

TOM

Why shouldn't I? As your fellow-craftsman once remarked: "I am a trifle light as air."

GRANT

I can't say you look it.

TOM

(*Eyeing him as he lights one of* GRANT'S *cigarettes*)

Since you don't recognize me perhaps you didn't do what you did to me—deliberately.

GRANT

But I've never done a thing to you.

TOM

Are we so soon forgot? (*Puffing*) Yet how reminiscent the odor of this cigarette. I notice you still smoke the same cheap brand.

GRANT

I must say I admire your nerve.

TOM

You ought to admire it. You gave it to me.

GRANT

I never gave you anything.

TOM

(*Bluntly*)

Liar! You gave me life!

GRANT

Gave you life?

TOM

Yes; I am your child.

GRANT

My child? (*He laughs.*)

TOM

Many a man before you has tried to deny paternity with a laugh.

GRANT

But you're old enough to *be* my father. Are you accusing me of improving on Nature?

TOM

All artists do. (*Picking up manuscript of* THE LONELY WAY.) Here's how you described me. (*Reading*) " . . . his eyes have a relentless coldness when they narrow . . . mouth firm but cruel. . . . Not attractive but impressive." There I am. Read it for yourself.

GRANT

Then you are—?

TOM

(*Sarcastically*)

Your child. Your once dearly beloved brain baby.

GRANT

(*Awed*)

Tom Robinson!

TOM

As you originally conceived him here in THE LONELY WAY.

GRANT

Well, I'm damned.

TOM

I suspect you are. *That's* what I'm here to see. (*Ominously*) And then if . . . (*Suddenly casual*) But sit down and we'll talk it over calmly first. (GRANT *sits down astonished.* TOM *sits also.*) Thanks.

GRANT

Go on.

TOM

Look at me. Here I am, as you drew me. Tom Robinson. Your greatest creation!

GRANT

I recognize the egotism.

TOM

(*Blurting*)

I am what my egotism made me. Your egotism also made you dare to conceive me, here at this very desk, out of your brain, in the puffs of your cheap cigarettes. The taps on your typewriter were my first heart beats. Your birth pains were my own cries of life.

GRANT

You certainly gave me a lot of trouble.

TOM

But you never suffered in having me as I did last night when I went with you to THE SAND BAR and saw what you'd done to Tom Robinson!

GRANT

(*More and more amused at what seems to be the childish petulance of an admittedly great man*)

You must have had quite a shock.

TOM

Shock? I was disgusted! Why, the actor who's interpreting me isn't even bad looking.

GRANT

No. He couldn't be. He's a star.

TOM

But *I* was your original conception. Why did you alter me into a good-looking fashion plate with charm? There never was anything charming about me; *never.*

GRANT

(*Glancing towards his wife's door*)

Please not so loud. I made you unpleasant, I know; but don't pile it on, Tom.

TOM

(*With dignity*)

Robinson to you.

GRANT
(*Smiling*)

I beg your pardon.

TOM

Why you authors feel you can take liberties with your characters is beyond me. I, for one, shall be treated with respect. (*His eyes narrow.*) Unless you have lost your capacity to respect a work of art like me.

GRANT

Come, come. I'm afraid it's you who have lost your sense of humor.

TOM
(*Sarcastically*)

Perhaps you didn't give me as much humor as you thought.

GRANT

But can't we talk over the object of your visit in a friendly spirit? (*With a smile.*) Say, as father to son?

TOM

You'll take me seriously before I'm through. I'll remind you that *I* was a force in THE LONELY WAY though in THE SAND BAR Tom Robinson is merely a figure. One suit a year was good enough for me. You make him change his every act.

GRANT

(*More at ease*)

I'm afraid you don't understand the demands of the modern theater.

TOM

What have I—a great character—to do with the modern theater?

GRANT

Nothing. That's why I revised you.

TOM

(*Bitterly*)

Then why did you give me life at all?

GRANT

Because then I was fool enough to think the modern theater was a place for great creations. I recognize the conditions better now.

TOM

But in THE LONELY WAY you didn't consider me a fool when *I* continued to paint great pictures—in spite of conditions.

GRANT

You were a great artist in that play.

TOM

And when you drew me you were a great dramatist. (*Sadly*) Now I see you are only a playwright.

GRANT

And at the National Tom Robinson has become only a painter of pot-boilers. (*Mockingly*) You've certainly come down in the world.

TOM

I don't need your pity; but I want you to realize that what you did to me you also did to yourself. When you made me fall, I brought you down with me. (*He shakes the manuscript before him.*) Look! I had life there in a powerful play.

GRANT

I won't dispute that. It was fine: beautifully articulated in its subtlety.

TOM

That just describes it. It was nearly as fine as my Sumatra Sunlight or even my Russian Nocturne.

GRANT

Which you never sold.

TOM

But what is painted lives for the future.

GRANT

Don't be sensitive: my LONELY WAY is still here. Nobody would produce it.

TOM

Yet you cared for nobody when you made me live in it—perfect as the frame that held me. The strength

you gave me in my own relentlessness was also yours. You glowed when you wrote it; as you made me glow when I painted. You felt the joy which only a creator knows when beauty and perfection slowly struggle out of his inner vision.

GRANT

But, my dear fellow . . .

TOM

Wait. Contrast this play with THE SAND BAR! With your skill as a builder you turned what was a lonely palace on a peak—aflame with my art—into a scrambly suburban residence where miserable ordinary people function. You produced a miserable makeshift of a play and made Tom Robinson a miserable makeshift of a man. (*Accusing him.*) But when you played tricks on me you played tricks on yourself. That's what you did when you took from Tom Robinson his genius and made him paint pot-boilers at the National. Pot-boilers! Pot-boilers! Me!! Good God, man, did you know what you were doing when you rewrote this play?

GRANT

(*Slowly*)

I knew exactly what I was doing. I was turning it into a popular success.

TOM

(*Outraged*)

You had not even the excuse of self-deception?

GRANT

No.

TOM

(*Eyeing him strangely*)

Then you are worse off than we thought!

GRANT

We?

TOM

I wonder how far you have fallen! I shall be patient till we see the depths of your artistic degradation.

GRANT

You said "we"?

A WOMAN'S VOICE

(*Outside*)

Yes. We.

(GRANT *gives a start towards the door, thinking the voice has come from his wife's room.*)

TOM

Oh, that isn't your wife.

GRANT

Then if you've some friend concealed about your person, hadn't you better produce her?

TOM

That isn't my friend; that's my wife.

GRANT

Your humor isn't inspiring. I've heard that brilliant retort before.

TOM

Certainly. You wrote it yourself; but you stole it from Molière. If I had your memory I'd be witty, too.

GRANT

(*Looking about*)

I don't seem to see Mrs. Robinson very clearly.

TOM

She says you never did. Come to think of it, she's no longer Mrs. Robinson.

GRANT

Oh, I forgot. In THE LONELY WAY you divorced her.

TOM

Marie and I haven't been on speaking terms since; but *after* she saw THE SAND BAR she simply insisted on coming here.

GRANT

Well, I'll be happy to hear her grievance, too.

TOM

(*Ominously*)

You won't think us so amusing when we are through with you.

GRANT

As a dramatist, I admire your talent for suspense. (*Calling*) Come in, Mrs. Robinson.

TOM

(*Correcting him*)

Case. Mrs. Pendleton Case. You've also forgotten that in THE LONELY WAY you made her marry him.

GRANT

To be sure. But in THE SAND BAR I made her stay with you.

TOM

Yes. That's one of her grievances.

GRANT

Come in, Mrs. Case.

(GRANT *watches* MARIE *come slowly from behind the curtains, into the light. Then he sees a handsome woman of thirty-five, bien soignée to the last degree. Yet somehow to* GRANT *her manner is an assumption she has acquired and not inherited. Beneath her vivid personality, her unrestrained moods glitter with force if not heat. But now she eyes him steadily with*

the greatest contempt. She wears a magnificent opera cloak, clutched close to her. She carries a small hand bag.

Though MARIE *and* TOM *are aware of each other's presence, they never address each other; they speak to each other through* GRANT *as though they existed only in him.*)

GRANT

Do sit down.

TOM

Oh, Marie will sit down. Don't worry.

(*Before she sits she carelessly throws her cloak over the same chair that* GRANT *had previously thrown his coat. She stands revealed in a beautiful evening gown. It seems to proclaim to* GRANT *her daring and contempt for conventions.*)

MARIE

After what I've just heard I don't know whether it's worth while to waste words on a creature like you.

GRANT

(*Very politely throughout*)

Your husband seems to have succeeded in doing it.

TOM

Her husband? Don't try to saddle her off on me. Once was enough.

MARIE

It's only our contempt for you, Mr. Williams, that finds us two together.

GRANT

To be sure. I keep forgetting.

(MARIE *takes a cigarette out of the hand bag;* GRANT *offers her a light.*)

Permit me.

(*She glares at him and refuses it. As she searches her hand bag for a match, a small pistol accidentally falls to the floor.* GRANT *quickly picks it up and hands it to her. She replaces it. He offers her another light, which she sullenly accepts.*)

MARIE

I wouldn't accept anything from you, only, in my haste, I forgot my matches. (*She crosses one knee over the other and puffs.*) Brr—it's cold here.

TOM

(*Bluntly*)

She wants a drink.

GRANT

Will she accept it from me?

TOM

She'll take it from anybody.

GRANT

Oh, yes, I remember. I beg your pardon.

MARIE

(*Seeing him lift up the milk bottle*)

Milk!

GRANT

(*Apologetically*)

When I gave you your fondness for alcohol in THE LONELY WAY, we didn't have prohibition.

MARIE

Was that the reason you took it away from Marie when you changed her in THE SAND BAR?

GRANT

Not exactly. You see no leading lady can ever have a real thirst. I'm sorry if you're cold.

TOM

Oh, Mrs. Case will warm up when she remembers what you've done to her. She had a wonderful temper when she lived with me.

MARIE

I had to have. And you also took that away from me.

GRANT

I'm very sorry, Mrs. Case; the leading lady didn't like your temper either.

MARIE

But *I* liked it. It was part of my character, as you originally conceived me.

GRANT

Yes; a character touch. It was the only comedy relief in my play.

TOM

It may have been comedy to you but it was no relief to me.

MARIE

(*Emotionally*)

My temper was my defense and my attack. It aroused fear and respect. Through it I got what I wanted out of life. It was mine! Mine! And you took it away from me! Oh!

(*She rushes angrily towards the milk bottle and lifts it above her as though to smash it; but* GRANT *stops her.*)

TOM

(*As he lights another cigarette*)

There you see. Every time she thinks of what a temper she has she loses it.

GRANT

(*Still holding the bottle with her*)

I concede your temper. I always had a hard time to control it. (*Taking it from her courteously.*) It was one of your most unpleasant traits.

MARIE

(*Sullenly*)

Then why did you change me?

GRANT

It's a professional secret, Mrs. Case. The leading lady hasn't the capacity to reach the heights your wonderful temper demanded. Besides, her specialty is cute ingénue stuff. She's a great popular favorite, you know, and is consequently afraid to lose her following by playing any part which lacks charm.

TOM

(*Bitterly*)

Charm! Charm! There it is again, Williams. You hadn't a bit of respect for Mrs. Case's *true* character so you made her charming.

MARIE

But you gave me a charm all my own before I married Tom.

TOM

She kept it to herself; I never suspected it after we were married.

MARIE

But, Mr. Williams, you knew no one could live with Tom Robinson and not lose her charm. All he really wanted of me was to cook his chops and wash his dishes.

TOM

She seems to forget she was my wife and that I was a genius. She wanted me to get my precious fingers red and rough in a dish pan.

MARIE

(*Flaring*)

No. I wanted him to be a human being, not an artist.

GRANT

(*Who has been trying to speak throughout*)

Please. Please. Remember you two are no longer married.

TOM

You see: she's warming up.

MARIE

(*Bitterly*)

How like old times.

GRANT

By Jove. I remember now. (*Opening manuscript.*) I remember everything about you.

MARIE

Don't be humorous. There's lots about your own characters you authors never know.

TOM

That's what critics are for.

MARIE

So don't try to make my temper seem trivial, Mr. Williams. I valued it. It gave me a chance to assert myself. It kept me alive as an individual. In THE LONELY WAY, while I was his wife, you made my whole fight to keep from being swamped by his personality.

TOM

As a married man yourself, Williams, you know damn well that women have got to capitulate in marriage. We husbands have got to close the door on them when they don't understand us.

MARIE

(*Contemptuously*)

And in THE SAND BAR, Marie didn't have the courage to take the things of life that lay outside the door! She didn't dare, like me, because you'd changed *her* into a sweet simpering woman who loved her husband.

TOM

But the Tom Robinson she loved there isn't the Tom Robinson you see here.

MARIE

No. The other is a hero! He's a halo on legs.

GRANT

Your ignorance of theatrical conditions is appalling. THE SAND BAR *had* to have a happy ending. If I

hadn't made you both charming the public wouldn't have believed in your ultimate happiness together.

TOM

(*Bringing his hand down on the table*)

Now we're getting at it. Why the devil did you bring us together?

GRANT

(*Trying to explain elementally*)

Because I'd turned you into the hero and you into the heroine. They must always come together for the final curtain.

MARIE

But I wasn't a heroine.

TOM

No. She's right there.

MARIE

(*Emotionally*)

I was a bitter, disillusionized woman. I saw how Tom Robinson succeeded in getting out of life what he wanted by being relentless. I, too, became relentless and married Pendleton Case because he could give me what *I* most wanted.

GRANT

(*Beginning from now on to lose his patience*)

Yes; but that was too unsympathetic a motive to

use in a popular play. So I *had* to make Pendleton Case a villain who took advantage of your trust in him.

MARIE

But Penny was only a poor gullible fool consumed by my egotism. Why were you so unfair to him? Why did you make him a villain?

TOM

Yes. I want to know why you gave him all my vices?

GRANT

If Case hadn't had all your vices, Marie wouldn't have had all the sympathy.

MARIE

I didn't want sympathy; I wanted clothes!

GRANT

(*Confused*)

But the leading lady has to have sympathy even without clothes. I mean——

TOM

(*Quickly*)

Do you mean that the reason you made me sacrifice my art in THE SAND BAR and rescue her from Case was because she had to have sympathy?

GRANT

Exactly. And, besides, how was an audience going to know you were a hero unless you sacrificed something?

TOM

But I'm not a hero: I'm an artist. You know the real reason I got rid of her was because she stood in the way of my art; because I wouldn't let a single human responsibility weaken the vision within me.

MARIE

Wasn't that reason enough why I should leave him?

GRANT

But that was too abstract an idea for the audience to get.

MARIE

So you turned an abstraction into a villain!

GRANT

Can't you see your husband couldn't rescue you from an abstraction?

MARIE

But I didn't want to be rescued. I wanted to marry Penny!

TOM

And I was tickled to death to get rid of her.

MARIE

Yes. It meant release for us both to be ourselves.

GRANT

But, Robinson, you *had* to rescue her. She was the leading lady. The manager pays her five hundred dollars a week to marry the star.

MARIE

Well, she earns it.

GRANT

She earns it because she draws.

TOM

(*Surprised*)

Does she paint, too?

GRANT

She draws that much money into the box office.

TOM

Money, money! How that runs through your talk.

MARIE

(*Referring to Tom*)

I wish to heaven it had run through his.

TOM

(*Lifting his voice angrily*)

I was above such things. I am an artist. Money! Money! I see red when I hear that word. Money! Money! The curse of true art.

GRANT

(*Pointing to his wife's door*)

Please, please; not so loud. You'll wake the baby.

MARIE

(*With a poignant cry*)

Oh!

GRANT

What's the matter with you?

MARIE

I forgot all about that. You also took my baby away from me in THE SAND BAR.

TOM

So far as I was concerned that was the only decent thing you did. I had to make money for the child.

MARIE

Have you forgotten that was the other reason I left him? He didn't love our child: it was in his way.

TOM

Love a mewling, puking child? Not much.

GRANT

(*Trying to calm her as she walks up and down*)

Sh! Control yourself.

MARIE

My love for the child was the only decent thing about me.

GRANT

But I gave you other virtues. I made you love your husband.

MARIE

If I *had* to love my husband in your revised version couldn't I at least have kept my child?

GRANT

Don't be unreasonable. No leading lady wants a child.

MARIE

So you took it away to please the leading lady!

GRANT

Can't you understand if I'd given her a child it would have complicated matters?

TOM

You're right. It certainly complicated matters for me.

GRANT

(*Trying to explain*)

I wanted the struggle to be a simple one between two men and a woman. A child would have been a side-issue.

MARIE

You call my child a side-issue! (*Looking at Tom.*) Hasn't his father anything to say to that?

TOM

(*To* GRANT)

She can't get me excited about that brat. It stood in my way. I'd have killed it myself if necessary.

MARIE

(*To* GRANT)

But *you* killed it instead.

GRANT

(*Losing patience*)

Yes. I killed it for the same reason he would have: because it would have stood in the way of the play's success. Are you a couple of fools? Can't you both get into your heads I was writing a play to make money?

TOM

Money! Money again!

MARIE

(*Astonished as she comes to* GRANT)

So you killed it for money?

GRANT

Yes. Just as I changed you both for money.

TOM

If you'd killed it for art I would have understood. But to kill a creature for money! You are a murderer!

MARIE

(*Sneering*)

And how much blood money will you get for what you have done?

GRANT

A thousand dollars a week!

MARIE

(*Overcome*)

My God!

TOM

(*Awed*)

How much did you say?

GRANT

A thousand a week.

MARIE

You're going to get that much for putting me into a popular success?

GRANT

Yes.

TOM

She isn't worth it.

GRANT

(*Determined to have it out with them*)

It was worth it to me. Think of the exquisite joy I had in revising my problem drama. Think of how I turned two hectic, distorted, twisted, selfish, miserable, little-souled characters into two self-sacrificing, sugar-coated, lovable beings!

TOM

You are not only a murderer but a hypocrite: you distorted life to win sympathy for us.

GRANT

The theater no longer has anything to do with life. It's a palace of personality.

TOM

Well, what's the matter with *my* personality?

MARIE

Leaving him aside, what about me?

GRANT

You wouldn't draw a cent. There wasn't a dollar in either of you.

MARIE

Is that *my* fault? You made us what we are.

GRANT

Yes; before I learned that the public pays to be pleased. Do you think there's anything pleasing about either of you? Why, you couldn't even be happy together.

TOM

This is getting damned personal.

MARIE

What right has the public got to be so proud of itself? There's many a woman in the audience worse than I am.

GRANT

But they want to be flattered into believing they are as much like heroes and heroines as you are not. The successful playwright, like the fashionable portrait painter, flatters and never reveals.

TOM

While true artists like me starve?

GRANT

And dramatists who write "Lonely Ways" also starve. What are you two kicking so about? Because I've made you respectable, wealthy and happy? Do you think the general public cares a whoop in Hades what *I* think of life, of my peculiar slant on the motives that mess up the characters that happen to interest *me?* No: all they want is what they want life to be.

TOM

How little you know of human nature. If we'd had a chance to be our true selves we would have been appreciated.

GRANT

By whom, pray? A few professional soul lovers. And they'd get into the theater on passes. No. You are caviar; most of the world lives on mush. So I mixed you in mush, sentimental glue, anything you want to call it.

TOM

You disgust me.

MARIE

But *I* see hope for you. At heart you despise the crowd, as I did its smug conventions.

GRANT

(*Bitterly*)

I hate what it has made me suffer.

TOM

Every great artist has despised them. I despise them.

GRANT

(*More seriously*)

Only I think the public has its rights. They have the right to laugh, to watch virtue triumph, to behold

success, to feel love win out, to see what they think is happiness. They have that right because their own lives are so full of the other things. And maybe they like to dream a little, too.

MARIE

Who's mushy now?

GRANT

Don't sneer at a popular success. It's sometimes more difficult to perform a trick than climb a mountain peak.

TOM

Have *we* artists no rights?

GRANT

(*Wearily*)

Only the right to dream and starve.

MARIE

But I'm not an artist: I'm one of your creations. Have *I* no rights? Must I be turned into a trained poodle and do tricks for money?

GRANT

You are only a phantom, a projection, a figment.

MARIE

(*With great indignation*)

You call me a figment?

TOM

(*Rising ominously*)

I'm tired of hearing you insult your own flesh and blood.

GRANT

I disowned you both when I rewrote you. I was thinking then of only one thing: the public.

TOM

Liar! You *did* deceive yourself! You were thinking of your wife and child.

MARIE

(*Seeing* GRANT *is startled*)

That gets you. You did this to us for them.

GRANT

(*Himself serious now throughout*)

Yes. I was thinking of them most of all.

MARIE

Yet when you created Tom Robinson in THE LONELY WAY you did not let him think of *his* wife and child.

TOM

That's where I was bigger than you, Grant Williams!

GRANT

You mean more brutal.

TOM

Mush. Mush. You can't hide behind that. (*Impressively.*) I am you! I could never have lived had I not been a wish hidden in yourself. I am what you would have been if you had dared!

GRANT

How dare you say a thing like that? I made you. I knew you inside and out.

TOM

But you didn't know yourself. *I* knew when you wrote me that you wanted to be as relentless as you made me.

GRANT

I hated you. I hated every bone beneath your miserable hide!

TOM

(*With a triumphant smile*)

That only proves it! You were afraid to be yourself; so you created me!

GRANT

(*Shrinking back*)

No . . . No . . .

TOM

You forget people have made gods and devils out of their own dreams to worship and hate. Look at me, through the mask you gave me, and see yourself! I

was the worst of what was human in you—the devil side of you: I was the best of what was the artist in you—the God within you!

GRANT

(*As though stunned by the thought*)

God and devil. No . . . No . . .

MARIE

(*Seriously*)

Now I see how *I* came into being. I was your wife, as part of you saw her! (*He protests.*) She was in your way, as I was in his way. You made Tom close the door on me because, deep in your soul, you wished to close it on her. She never understood.

GRANT

Stop. You shan't go any further. She stood by me through all these years of poverty. She loves me and understands.

MARIE

(*Relentlessly*)

But you thought her a fool for loving you. You really thought she ought to go. You wanted her to go, I tell you. You wanted her to see that your art meant more to you than her love. But you didn't have the courage to do to her what you made him do to me!

GRANT

(*To* TOM)

Take her away! I won't let her say these things. I did what I did to you for Jerry's sake. I wanted to

make money so *she* would be happy. I couldn't stand it to see her hands grow rough . . .

TOM

(*Contemptuously*)

Bosh! Art denies all human responsibility. You made me face that truth with my wife, and when I threw her out I was *your* own inner answer to that eternal question!

GRANT

I tell you my love for her is greater than for my art.

MARIE

Mush. Mush. It's time to think of punishment.

GRANT

Punishment? (*Triumphantly*) I have a thousand a week. She will have clothes and comfort. And you talk of punishment!

MARIE

(*Drawing a pistol and pointing it at him*)

What you did to us means your death.

TOM

(*Stopping her*)

No. You cannot be killed, Grant Williams. You are dead already.

MARIE

(*About to shoot*)

I think I'll make sure.

TOM

(*As* GRANT *stares at him spellbound*)

When you turned your soul into money you died. There is a greater punishment. We'll let what remains of you live, as we shall live to haunt you in your dreams.

GRANT

(*Laughing hysterically*)

But you can't live. I killed you. You're dead, too. And the dead cannot dream.

TOM

We are your dreams. We will outlast you.

MARIE

We live. We shall go on living. Yes. That is a greater revenge. We'll haunt you every time you are alone. . . .

GRANT

You can't. You can't . . .

TOM

Whenever you smoke and think in your new house . . .

MARIE

Or walk by the sands, you will see only our hands beckon you from the living waters of the sea . . .

GRANT

(*Frantically*)

I'll drown you like rats. I'll keep you under till you are dead. You shan't come back . . . ever . . . ever . . . (*They both laugh.*) Get out. You phantoms . . . I'll kill you again . . .

TOM

Mush . . . Mush . . .

GRANT

I'll kill you forever now. (*He picks up the manuscript of* THE LONELY WAY *and savagely tears it up.*) Die. Die forever . . . Die . . .

(*They laugh loudly and mockingly at him.*)

TOM

You see we still live!

GRANT

Ah. I'll kill you yet. I'll kill you!

(*He rushes towards them and overturns the lamp. They laugh mockingly farther off in the complete darkness.*)

I'll kill you! I'll kill you!

JERRY

(*As she enters*)

Grant!! What is the matter?

(*She turns on the switch by the door. The other lights flare up. She is dressed in a kimono, with her hair in braids. He rushes towards her.*)

GRANT

I'll kill you!

JERRY

Grant!

(*He holds her arms, suddenly realizing who she is and that they are alone.*)

GRANT

You are real, aren't you? You are flesh and blood?

JERRY

Silly boy. What on earth is the matter with you? I go out of the room for a moment and I come back to find you yelling and wanting to kill me.

GRANT

(*Still dazed*)

No. It wasn't true: I don't want to get rid of you. I . . .

JERRY

(*In a matter-of-fact tone*)

I do wish you'd get over the habit of acting all your plays out. The neighbors will think you and I

aren't happy. You'd better come to bed and get some rest.

GRANT

I—I couldn't sleep just now.

(*He goes over to the table and sees the manuscript of* THE LONELY WAY *untouched. He stands trying to collect himself.*)

JERRY

It's upset you, reading over THE LONELY WAY?

GRANT

(*Half to himself*)

That's strange.

JERRY

Then what is the matter?

GRANT

(*Evasively as he sits down wearily*)

I—I was reading over the notices.

JERRY

I should have thought they'd soothe you, not get you so excited. Though there is one that put me in a terrible temper. (*He looks at her quickly.*) Why did you conceal the *Gazette* notice from me? (*Smiling, she shows it to him: he takes it.*) Did you think this would worry me because Arthur Black said THE SAND BAR didn't live up to the promise of your other plays?

GRANT

(*Half to himself*)

And he was the only one who liked the others that failed.

JERRY

But it is outrageous of him to say you'd deserted your ideals. I have half a mind to write to the Editor.

GRANT

(*With a thought*)

Would it mean so very much to you if it were true?

JERRY

Of course it would.

GRANT

(*Defensively*)

But, after all, Jerry, does it make any difference to anybody but the artist whether he sells out or not?

JERRY

But, dear, *I* think you've just begun to reach your ideals.

GRANT

Just begun?

JERRY

Yes. I never told you before because I didn't want to discourage you when we were so hard up. But,

Grant dear, I never liked all those other plays—especially THE LONELY WAY. They seemed unworthy of you. THE SAND BAR is the first play that really seems true to life.

GRANT

(*Staring at her*)

Really true to life?

JERRY

Yes. And I hope from now on you'll go on writing the plays that will make people feel happier and . . .

GRANT

(*Suddenly bursting out in an ironic laugh*)

I've got it. I've got it.

JERRY

What?

GRANT

The curtain raiser Trebaro wants. I'll call it THE MASK. No. MASKS! That's the title. I'll show *them* whether I'm dead or not.

JERRY

What are you talking of?

GRANT

The theme of my play: that so long as an artist knows what he is doing with his art he is alive: that the only thing which can kill him is self-deception.

JERRY

Dear me, you're going to write another play nobody will understand?

GRANT

(*Contemptuously*)

Why should I care whether *anybody* will understand it?

JERRY

But Trebaro won't produce it, dear.

GRANT

Oh yes, he will: he said he'd produce anything I wrote no matter how good it was.

JERRY

(*Seeing him eagerly go to his typewriter*)

You're going to begin it *now?*

GRANT

Yes. *Now.* I can write it off at a sitting.

JERRY

To-night—of all nights?

GRANT

Yes. As Tom said: while the "glow" is here. Now that I'm free. I'll show them whether I'm dead or not. I'll use their very words. I'll make it bite.

JERRY
(*Completely lost*)

I don't understand you or what you are talking about.

GRANT
(*Gives her a look*)

You don't need to understand now, Jerry; THE SAND BAR has released you.

JERRY
(*Hurt*)

I never heard you talk like this before. You're unkind.

GRANT
(*Putting paper in machine*)

I don't mean to be, dear; only my nerves are on edge.

JERRY
(*Begins to cry*)

I can see that. You've no regard for my feelings.

GRANT

I have my work . . .

JERRY

You seem so far off all of a sudden. To-night of all nights! Just when you've made your first real success!

GRANT

(*More testily*)

Please. Please, Jerry. I won't be able to write this if I have to think of anything else.

(*He begins to write. He looks about the room showing he is describing it.*)

" The scene is the living-room in a flat. The doorway from the public stairs opens immediately upon it without the intervening privacy of a small hallway . . ."

(*He murmurs as he goes on, striking the keys very rapidly. She stands looking at him—hurt and wondering what it means: but he is absorbed. Then she slowly goes to the kerosene heater and lights it. She looks at him a moment.*)

JERRY

I guess I won't wait up for you to-night. I'm cold.

(*She goes out, hardly controlling herself. He continues for a moment. Then he gets up, still absorbed, and closes the door after her. He resumes his work with the glow of intense creation on his face.*)

[CURTAIN]

JIM'S BEAST

THE PEOPLE

BRONTOSAURUS, *a fossil.*
SARAH, *a scrubwoman.*
PROFESSOR POHL, *a curator.*
ROBERT HOOD, *a member of the Legislature.*
ELIZABETH LIVINGSTON, *a seeker of sensations.*
MRS. CORNELIUS VAN DYKE, *a social leader.*
MRS. JAMES MORROW, *a wealthy woman.*
ROBERT LIVINGSTON, *a good citizen.*
LARRY ANDERSON, *a doughboy.*

SCENE

A corner in the Hall of Paleontology of a Public Museum; late one afternoon.

JIM'S BEAST*

TWO arched passageways are in back, and between them, on the wall, is a large dark plaster cast which may be a replica of the famous Dinosaur footprints in Brownstone. Beneath this is a low bench. At the extreme right, as one enters from back, there are two cases, just visible, in which are fossil bones and casts. There is a bench near them and an aisle between which leads off to the windows beyond, suggested by the soft streams of sunlight which shoot over the tops of the cases to the BRONTOSAURUS *opposite. Only the dull-colored flat skull and a portion of the neck of this venerable fossil are to be seen, projecting about a yard or two. It stands seven feet above its low platform, which is surrounded by a railing. On this is a slanted sign which describes it. Its size, its grimness and the light which rests upon it make it dominate everything. The remainder of the huge dinosaur is masked by a high screen at its left, upon which hangs a map indicating by its varied horizontal shades of color, the various geological strata and periods.*

When the curtain slowly lifts, SARAH, *a scrubwoman, is on her knees, mopping the floor with long practised sweeps.*

She is fifty, heavy, with a dull tired face lined by

* Copyright by George Middleton. See back of title page.

years of physical toil. Though her hair is tightly drawn back and tied in a knot, several long wisps fall across her eyes as she leans forward over her work; and she continually pushes these back with her arm, since her hands are wet and soapy.

As she wrings her rag savagely she mumbles to herself in a rich Irish brogue.

SARAH

Scrub. Mop. Scrub. (*She looks up at the* BRONTOSAURUS.) Keepin' watch on me, too, ye dirty heathen. Grinnin' there every day at me a-scrubbin' and moppin'.

(*She raises the rag, in momentary revolt, as though she were about to throw it at the skull. But she stops sullenly as she mechanically resumes her work.*)

Ye dirty heathen . . . me a-scrubbin' . . .

(*As she finds a hairpin and sticks it in her hair,* PROF. POHL *enters, carrying a small plaster cast in which is embedded the outlines of a fossil.*

PROF. POHL, *the curator, is a short, round-shouldered man nearing sixty. He is absorbed in his scientific interest, devoid of conscious humor and fundamentally inclined to be impatient with anything that has not been dead for at least several million years.*)

PROFESSOR

Good afternoon, Sarah.

SARAH

(*Mumbling half to herself resentfully, as he walks over where she has just mopped*)

And I was just after a-moppin' up that place.

PROFESSOR

You're cleaning up earlier than usual.

SARAH

Wipe 'em up as they comes, says I: it's easier in the end.

PROFESSOR

But I'm expecting over two hundred soldiers here this afternoon.

SARAH

(*Astonished*)

Here? What's the matter with 'em?

PROFESSOR

They're slightly wounded.

SARAH

Shure: that explains it.

PROFESSOR

All the theaters are entertaining them so I've invited them here. I thought the soldiers might enjoy having me personally show them through the paleontological section. Dr. Taylor has volunteered to explain the mummies.

SARAH

What between these dead 'uns and them ould ladies the boys'll be havin' a foine time, all roight.

PROFESSOR

I thought it might be edifying, too.

SARAH

(*As she resumes her mopping*)

They'll be a-makin' more work for me; but footprints is footprints no matter who makes 'em.

PROFESSOR

(*Looking in case at the right*)

Now where's that card?

(*He tries to get key out of pocket to open case but he is afraid of breaking the cast.*)

Sarah, will you assist me?

SARAH

Me! Touch one of them dead corpses?

PROFESSOR

No; no. That's so; you'd get them wet.

(*She watches him as he goes to bench and lays the cast down carefully on the handkerchief he has spread for it. Then he goes over to case, opens it with a key, returns for cast and puts it with care and affection in the case.*)

SARAH

Ye'd be a-thinkin' it was a baby ye was puttin' to bed.

PROFESSOR

(*Admiring them*)

All these are my children, Sarah.

SARAH

(*Mumbling as she looks up at the* BRONTOSAURUS)

I'd see a doctor about it if I was their mother.

PROFESSOR

There. (*He closes the case.*) That's a very rare Pterodactyl. (*She is somehow not impressed.*) I've reconstructed it from five tiny bones found in Oregon.

SARAH

(*Wringing mop with a contemptuous look at him*)

Why go to all that trouble?

PROFESSOR

I'm afraid you wouldn't understand. I study fossils, Sarah, because it is my profession—just as scrubbing is yours.

SARAH

Do ye have to do it?

PROFESSOR

No; I chose it. I'm very happy in it.

SARAH

What I'd loike to know is why I've got to scrub and mop all the day? *I* don't do it for pleasure.

PROFESSOR

(*Failing to see the human analogy*)

Somebody's got to keep the Museum clean.

SARAH

(*Seeing him blow off some clay from bench*)

Yes. Some o' us is born to wipe up other people's dirt, and some's born to make it. (*Wiping it.*) Why can't everybody clean up his own dirt, says I? Maybe they wouldn't be makin' so much.

PROFESSOR

I daresay you're right. (*Over by the* BRONTOSAURUS.) You've forgotten to run your rag over this platform.

SARAH

(*Rebelliously*)

Ye don't git me inside th' rail with that dirty heathen.

PROFESSOR

The superintendent tells me he's had to remind you every day.

SARAH

(*Her revolt rises*)

If I've got to go inside there alone ye can tell 'im I'm through. There's plenty of dirty places in the world what needs cleanin' and if I've got to mop I'm going to do me own pickin' of dirt an' places.

PROFESSOR

(*Firmly*)

But you forget you're paid for this.

SARAH

If ye'll pardon my saying so I ain't paid to go rubbin' agin' the slats of that dirty heathen loike you. I'm paid me two an' a quarter a day to wash up people's tracks. Two an' a quarter a day, mind ye, by this place what owns jewels and things they wraps up in satins and laces what honest people could git some comfort out of—and the cost of livin' mountin' high as St. Peter himself.

PROFESSOR

(*Impatiently*)

If you won't keep it clean, there are plenty of scrub-women who will.

SARAH

Ye care more for the looks of that dirty heathen than ye do for my feelin's.

PROFESSOR

(*Outraged*)

Sarah! You forget there are only a few fossils like this in existence! I don't want to have to report you for lack of respect.

SARAH

Shure, it's not ye I'm not respectin'—it's that other inhuman beast.

PROFESSOR

Now be a sensible girl and run your rag over it.

SARAH

(*Sullenly as her revolt subsides*)

Oh, all roight. It's seein' it in me sleep I am as it is. (*She slowly picks up the mop and pail and goes under the rail, cautiously rubbing the platform with wide stretched arms.*)

PROFESSOR

Around the feet, Sarah.

SARAH

They're so big it's glad I am they've put a brass rail around 'im so he can't be prowlin' about at night trackin' the place up. It's bad enough some of the people what come here to see him.

PROFESSOR

But you have less to clean up than some of the other girls. (*Sighing.*) So few people wander in this out of the way section.

SARAH

Ye don't think anyone would be fool enough to look at these corpses for pleasure, do ye?

PROFESSOR

I suppose not.

SARAH

Even though it means more work to my poor back, I'm goin' to ask to be put over where the cases of butterflies are. When I was a-scrubbin' around them I could be thinkin' that I was out among the daisies, instead of hangin' 'round a morgue.

PROFESSOR

That's much better, Sarah. (*Gazing in admiration at the fossil.*) Wonderful specimen—wonderful!

(ROBERT HOOD *enters. He is a well set-up, attractive young man about thirty. As he glances impatiently at his watch, it is evident he is ill at ease and under the stress of an unusual emotion. Though he carries a Museum catalogue it is soon apparent he has come for a rendezvous.*

SARAH *soon disappears from view—scrubbing.*)

HOOD

I beg your pardon. Is this where the Brontosaurus lives?

PROFESSOR

Yes. (*Proudly*) This is the Brontosaurus.

HOOD

(*Indifferently*)

Oh, is it? Thanks.

PROFESSOR

Are you interested in fossils?

HOOD

Fossils?—Oh, yes; but only the living ones.

PROFESSOR

Oh, then you've come to see the Hoatzins?

HOOD

(*Impatiently*)

Not especially.

PROFESSOR

They're in the ornithological section. Curious, isn't it, when people think fossils are so remote, that to-day in the thorn bushes along the Berbice River there should be a small living bird who swims, creeps, climbs, dives and can duplicate within a few minutes the processes of evolution through the centuries. Mr. Beebe calls them "living fossils"; so when you said . . .

HOOD

(*Again looking at his watch*)

It's very interesting.

PROFESSOR

Their wing formation somewhat resembles the Archæopteryx. We have a cast of the Solenhofen specimen, if you . . .

HOOD

I have a catalogue. I'd like to study them myself, quietly at first, if you don't mind.

(*He sits down on the bench at back and opens the catalogue. The* PROFESSOR *is offended, gives him a look and goes out. The minute he has gone,* HOOD *arises, takes several steps about as though looking for someone.* SARAH *has entered with her pail and watches him. She stands there, a worn and abject figure.* HOOD *takes out his watch again.*)

SARAH

I beg ye pardon?

HOOD

(*Startled a moment*)

Eh?

SARAH

Do ye be havin' the toime about ye?

HOOD

My watch says four. But I think it must be fast.

SARAH

(*As she wearily crosses*)

Thank ye, sir.

HOOD

(*A bit anxiously*)

When does the Museum close?

SARAH

For ye or for me?

HOOD

Why, for me; of course.

SARAH

Ye'll hear the bell in a half-hour; it's not long after that I'll be a-pullin' up these shades.

HOOD

Thanks.

SARAH

(*Pointedly as she begins to wash up his footsteps*)

If ye need more toime to *look* at the animals ye may be doin' it, as the Professor is expectin' a whole regiment of soldiers.

HOOD

(*Vexed*)

Coming *here?* I thought nobody ever came here?

SARAH

Ye mustn't be surprised at anythin' in a museum. All the strange animals ain't behind the railin's.

(*She gives him a knowing look and finally goes out of sight, mopping down the aisle. He takes a step impatiently and then sits in back and opens catalogue aimlessly as he sees* MRS. CORNELIUS VAN DYKE *and* MRS. JAMES

MORROW *enter from back. They do not notice him at first.*

MRS. VAN DYKE *is a harmless middle-aged woman who throughout life has comfortably relied on her blood instead of her brains. She hides the absence of the latter by a calm and superior imperturbability.*

Her companion, MRS. JAMES MORROW, *is younger; obviously nouveau riche, she has achieved a successful manner, most of which is dexterously expressed in her lorgnette.*

Both women are handsomely gowned and proclaim to the observer flaunting wealth.)

MRS. VAN DYKE

I'm sure we've lost our way.

MRS. MORROW

The attendant said keep turning to the right.

MRS. VAN DYKE

I can't say it's my idea of ancient jewelry.

MRS. MORROW

No. But if we dressed up at Mrs. Bilton's ball like some of these animals, we'd certainly make a hit.

MRS. VAN DYKE

It might suit you, dear; but I think I'll wear at least some jewelry. I'm sure there must be wonderful

old pieces in the museum I can get Tiffany to copy in time. I must find something original.

MRS. MORROW

(*Looking absently at* HOOD *through her lorgnette*)

Dear me, this is a terrible place—full of monsters.

MRS. VAN DYKE

I can't say they're very showy. (*Glancing at the* BRONTOSAURUS.) What an ugly animal! What is it?

MRS. MORROW

(*Reading sign*)

It's a Bron— (*Not able to pronounce it and turning away*) I left my reading-glasses at home. You try.

MRS. VAN DYKE

(*After studying it a moment*)

Oh, yes: I've heard of them. (*More closely.*) Why, that looks like your husband . . .

MRS. MORROW

(*Interrupting, as she turns quickly to the fossil*)

My husband? That?

MRS. VAN DYKE

(*Looking more closely*)

Yes. It *is* your husband's name. (*Reading*) "Donated by James Morrow."

MRS. MORROW

Why this must be Jim's beast!

MRS. VAN DYKE

Jim's beast?

(HOOD *covertly shows a bit of interest in spite of his more pressing impatience over their presence.*)

MRS. MORROW

I knew there was something here Jim wanted me to see. He donated $250,000 to the museum last year. He said they'd bought some old animal with it.

MRS. VAN DYKE

I can't say I admire his taste. I thought he went in for horses.

MRS. MORROW

Of course, it's Jim's own money; but it does seem a bit extravagant to turn all that money into old bones.

MRS. VAN DYKE

Yes; when he might buy so many nicer things you could wear.

MRS. MORROW

Jim's been awfully generous to me; though, of course, now that the war's over we've got to hold in a bit. He hasn't any more army contracts, you know. (*Sighing*) It certainly was wonderful while it lasted.

MRS. VAN DYKE

I shouldn't worry about it if I were you. Why, even this beast would look like a piece of bric-a-brac in that new house he gave you.

MRS. MORROW

(*The hand of* SARAH *mopping in the aisle is seen.* MRS. MORROW *is startled.*)

What's that?

MRS. VAN DYKE

Oh, it's only an old scrubwoman.

MRS. MORROW

They might wait till the museum closed before they splash about spoiling our gowns.

MRS. VAN DYKE

Well, if we're ever going to see that ancient jewelry before we're as old as it is, I suppose we'd better try and find it.

MRS. MORROW

But I'll have to tell Jim I came especially to see his beast: he'll want to know what it looks like, the poor dear!

(ELIZABETH LIVINGSTON *enters. She is a woman of such an indefinite age that she must be past her early thirties. Handsome, well-groomed and yet a bit hectic, her secret is that she is a born intriguanté and likes to see men feverish.*

She sees HOOD: *he sees her: the two women catch this exchange of glances, though* HOOD *instantly resumes reading and* BESS *goes quickly to the case opposite not to betray she is there to meet* HOOD.

The two women exchange significant glances. HOOD *looks up and catches* MRS. MORROW *eyeing him through her lorgnette. He rises in question.*)

MRS. MORROW

(*To cover it*)

I beg pardon. Do *you* happen to know where they keep the ancient jewelry?

HOOD

(*Politely*)

I think it's to the right.

MRS. VAN DYKE

But that's what the other man said.

HOOD

Have you tried the long hall?

MRS. MORROW

But *which* hall?

HOOD

(*Obviously trying to get rid of them*)

The very *furthest* hall.

MRS. MORROW

Oh . . . (*She turns to* MRS. VAN DYKE.) The very furthest hall, he said. (*Aside to her as they turn*) I'm afraid we're *de trop*. I'm sure it's . . .

MRS. VAN DYKE

I thought so, too; and with a different tame robin this time. (*As she turns and looks at the* BRONTOSAURUS.) I'm glad I won't look like Jim's beast when I'm dead.

MRS. MORROW

Well, dear, we'll never be found in a museum at any rate.

MRS. VAN DYKE

(*As they go up*)

I don't know. I'm most dead already.

(MRS. MORROW *gives a look at* BESS *through her lorgnette. They go out obviously gossiping about her.*

HOOD *takes a step to see they have gone. Then he turns tensely.*)

HOOD

Bess!

BESS

Oh, Bob!

HOOD

Dearest!

BESS

Be careful. Somebody may see us. I'm sure those women . . .

HOOD

(*With extravagant expression*)

I'd like the whole world to see us. I can't stand this much longer. Bess, I want you.

BESS

I know. Sh!

(SARAH *comes from out of aisle, goes out of sight, obviously to clean another aisle. But she has seen them and gives a knowing smile as though such rendezvous were not unusual.*)

HOOD

It can't go on like this.

BESS

Aren't you satisfied with what we've already had?

HOOD

(*Unconsciously playing up to the situation*)

I want all or nothing—the *you* all the world has, too. I . . .

BESS

Yes? Say it. I like to hear you say it.

HOOD

I want you to be my wife. (*Intensely*) Bess! Bess! Will you?

BESS

Give me time to think.

HOOD

But it can't go on like this . . . having me meet you in strange places . . . always being afraid. Bess, you love me, don't you?

BESS

Oh, Bob!

HOOD

You've never loved anybody before as you love me?

BESS

Oh, no; you're so fine and strong and . . .

HOOD

Then why are you afraid?

BESS

The world . . . my world . . . your world . . .

HOOD

But you wouldn't be the first who . . .

BESS

Don't drive me to the wall!

HOOD

You must decide.

BESS

I'm thinking of you. I'm older than you. In time, perhaps, you . . .

HOOD

Never.

BESS

How you say it!

HOOD

I love you. I've never loved any woman before. I'll never love any woman again.

BESS

My dear boy! I must go now. I just wanted to see you, to hear you say you love me.

HOOD

And I came because I wanted a definite answer.

BESS

Wait. In time. Don't drive me to the wall.

HOOD

(*Heroically*)

I tell you I'll kill myself if . . .

BESS

Bob! Do you care as much as that?

HOOD

Yes. Nothing else matters.

BESS

But your career—your position?

HOOD

You are more than all that. What will you give up for me?

BESS

Sh! Somebody's coming. (*In a different tone, mistress of herself.*) It must have taken a good many years to collect these specimens.

(RAY LIVINGSTON *has come in on this, walking slowly down with eyes that glitter for a moment on seeing them.*

He is about sixty. The tightly drawn skin on his face clearly reveals the bones beneath. He is an aristocratic, calm, collected man: the essence of deliberate politeness. When he comes to them he acts as though he were surprised.)

LIVINGSTON

Bess. This is a surprise.

BESS

Ray?

LIVINGSTON

Do you come here often?

BESS

I was just strolling through to look at some ancient jewelry when I happened to meet Mr. Hood.—This is my husband. Mr. Hood.

(*As* LIVINGSTON *crosses slowly and shakes his hand with cold studied courtesy,* HOOD *gives him a sickly smile, ill at ease in an unaccustomed situation.*)

LIVINGSTON

I'm charmed to meet you. I've heard Mrs. Livingston speak of you. Let me see, where was it?

BESS

(*Casually, mistress of herself*)

Perhaps it was after I first met him at Judge Wilton's. Mr. Hood is in the Legislature, you know.

LIVINGSTON

To be sure. I remember your photograph in all the newspapers. (*Half playfully*) But you're rather a young man for such a conspicuous and responsible office.

HOOD

(*Trying to be at ease*)

One soon grows older up there.

LIVINGSTON

(*Pleasantly*)

I hope that means wiser; for wisdom, I'm told, is only a matter of perspective, and its secret is finding the relative importance of things. (*With a smile.*) But, of course, *every*thing must seem vitally important at the beginning. Just as each moment of life was *once* the most important thing to these animals. (*Before* HOOD *can answer.*) Are you interested in fossils?

HOOD

(*Eyes him*)

I'm trying to understand their meaning and significance.

LIVINGSTON

Do you find it difficult? I see you have a catalogue. Do you come here to study them?

BESS

(*Trying with her skill to relieve the situation*)

Mr. Hood was just telling me he was planning to introduce a bill in the Legislature to—to extend the wings.

LIVINGSTON

To extend the wings? What of?

BESS

Of the Museum, of course.

LIVINGSTON

Indeed?

HOOD

(*Lying in spite of himself*)

Yes.

BESS

(*With a reassuring smile*)

He thinks it's a bit cramped here.

LIVINGSTON

I quite approve. Space is what is needed. But you'll find it difficult to get money from the Legislature for such purposes. I've tried myself.

HOOD

Oh, are you interested in museums?

LIVINGSTON

Didn't you tell him, Bess, about the museum I had planned?

BESS

(*Beginning to detect his intention*)

No; it slipped my mind.

LIVINGSTON

(*Playfully reproving her*)

And I had such a personal interest in it, too.

HOOD

Was it a museum for fossils?

LIVINGSTON

It was to prevent people from becoming fossils before their time. It was a museum of safety appliances.

HOOD

Industrial?

LIVINGSTON

No: domestic. From a very long life, I'd observed that in the world and in the home, most everybody, through lack of a little precaution, makes a fool of himself or herself once or twice in a life.

BESS

(*Suavely*)

I thought the average was higher; didn't you, Mr. Hood?

LIVINGSTON

Perhaps the nasty messy mangling is. I'm not sure of the mortalities. You see, Mr. Hood—if you are interested?

HOOD

(*With a start*)

Very.

LIVINGSTON

What I mean is that people cut off a useful hand or limb—metaphorically, of course—because they go

a little too near the machinery: the machinery of what we call the hard facts of life.

HOOD

And what was your exhibit intended for?

LIVINGSTON

(*Pointedly*)

To have them read the danger signs *first*. It was my plan to indicate how signs should be put up over certain places, like stores and homes and . . .

BESS

(*Calmly*)

How interesting. What sort of signs were they to be, dear?

HOOD

"Don't Handle," "Watch Your Step." You know the sort. You see, I have a theory that if these signs were placed about in enough places people would soon grow accustomed to carrying them in their mind's eye, as it were. (*Pointedly*) Do you get my meaning?

BESS

But, dear; there are so many signs now. Look at these about here for instance. I'm sure people would never get anything out of these by carrying them about in their heads.

LIVINGSTON

It's merely a matter of how much intelligence and imagination you bring to signs—otherwise they are only words.

(*As* LIVINGSTON *crosses to read sign under the* BRONTOSAURUS, HOOD *makes a movement as though to speak, but* BESS, *who has sat on the bench, stops him with an imploring gesture.*)

Um—highly suggestive, this. (*Reading*) "Great Amphibious Dinosaur Brontosaurus . . . Jurassic Period . . . Donated by James Morrow. . . . The Brontosaurus lived several million years ago. . . ." You see (*To them*) James Morrow and the animal have clasped hands over the centuries. Um. From this sign, can't you picture the love and devotion to science that prompted such a gift?

HOOD

(*Now smiling for the first time*)

As it happens he didn't even know what his money was for. While I was waiting here I heard Mrs. Morrow say . . . (*He stops short as* LIVINGSTON *gives him a sharp look.*)

BESS

(*Quickly*)

You see, dear, you were mistaken in that sign.

LIVINGSTON

(*Casually*)

Perhaps. Curious though how much information a man picks up while he *waits* about. (*He crosses over*

to the case opposite.) I wonder what this one will reveal.

(HOOD *sees he has been caught in a slip. It spurs him into a mood of retaliation. He overcomes a momentary hesitation and then shows he resolves to tell* LIVINGSTON *everything.*)

HOOD

(*With hoarse nervous intensity*)

Mr. Livingston!

BESS

(*Under her breath to him*)

Bob!

LIVINGSTON

(*Not turning*)

Yes?

(*For a second* HOOD *is about to speak, but he is halted by* BESS'S *look and voices, as the* PROFESSOR, *followed by* LARRY ANDERSON, *enters.*

LARRY *is a fine strapping doughboy in his uniform, on which are two gold service stripes and several decorations for bravery. His hand is bandaged. They come down.*

As LIVINGSTON *gives no indication of leaving,* BESS *still sits there while* HOOD *keeps his eyes on her husband's back. His silence holds them there.*)

PROFESSOR

But I was expecting at least two hundred.

LARRY

They got lost on the way.

PROFESSOR

Lost?

LARRY

Yes. I left them at the Follies. But I'd heard my uncle speak of this place.

PROFESSOR

(*Brightens*)

Is your uncle interested in fossils?

LARRY

Yes. He's a queer bug. He told me to be sure and not miss the Chamber of Horrors. You know, where all the Kings and Queens and statesmen are embalmed in wax?

PROFESSOR

But, my dear friend, they tore down the Eden Musée several years ago.

LARRY

They did? Why didn't they wait till I got back? Haven't you any Chamber of Horrors here?

PROFESSOR

No; this is the Paleontological section.

LARRY

(*Looking about*)

Well, now that I'm here maybe this will do as well.

(LIVINGSTON *now turns, leaning against the case, much interested in the two men. As he shows no intention of moving,* BESS *sits there, twisting her handkerchief nervously in her hand.* HOOD *is embarrassed and undecided.*)

Trot 'em out, so I can tell uncle I've seen 'em.

PROFESSOR

(*Pointing to* BRONTOSAURUS)

This is a major Dinosaur.

LARRY

Major what?

PROFESSOR

The more popular name is the Brontosaurus.

LARRY

Is that so? (*Looking at it.*) Some bird!

PROFESSOR

It's a reptile: its name means Thunder Lizard because its mighty tread shook the earth.

LARRY

Where did it grow?

PROFESSOR

From other bones we have found I should say it roamed all over the world. This specimen was dug up in Wyoming.

LARRY

What was it doing in Wyoming?

PROFESSOR

(*On his dignity*)

It was possibly overtaken there by an earthquake.

LARRY

Must have been some earthquake.

PROFESSOR

Since it was thus buried in silica away from the decomposing air and moisture, it was preserved for centuries—till we happened to discover it with a pick.

LARRY

You don't say so! (*He looks at it a bit awed.*) When we were digging trenches in No Man's Land we used to find . . .

PROFESSOR

What?

LARRY

Not that sort of bones.

PROFESSOR

This was in an excellent state of preservation. It is sixty feet long and must have weighed when alive forty tons. It took seven years to dig it out and mount it. We had to be very careful not to break its marvelous tail. If you'll walk to the other end you'll get an idea of its length. We found ninety-seven perfect vertebræ.

LARRY

Ninety-seven? You don't say so?

PROFESSOR

You can count them and see.

LARRY

Ninety-seven what you call 'ems! Think of that. (*As he goes up.*) And you say it came from Wyoming?

PROFESSOR

Yes.

LARRY

(*Proudly*)

That's my state, too.

(LARRY *wanders off out of sight looking at the fossil. As the* PROFESSOR *starts to follow,* LIVINGSTON, *who has been watching his wife and* HOOD, *stops him.*)

LIVINGSTON

I beg your pardon. I hope you won't mind our being interested in what you were saying; but we were wondering about the animal ourselves.

(HOOD *looks at* BESS *quickly not knowing what* LIVINGSTON *is driving at.*)

PROFESSOR

(*Brightening*)

Indeed? I'm afraid our young friend is a bit irreverent.

LIVINGSTON

May I ask what is known of its domestic habits?

PROFESSOR

It was hardly a domestic animal. Its family life probably extended only during the infancy of its young.

LIVINGSTON

Was this a female, by chance?

PROFESSOR

Yes: the large pelvic development . . .

LIVINGSTON

This one undoubtedly had young, too?

PROFESSOR

Of course. But we have never found any of its eggs. It was a reptile, you know.

LIVINGSTON

But while they were dependent it undoubtedly fought to protect its young—like other animals?

PROFESSOR

With very few exceptions all the female animals at least do that; even those of low intelligence.

LIVINGSTON

This one couldn't by any chance have been wooed away from that obligation by romantic notions?

PROFESSOR

(*Suspiciously*)

This—romantic?

LIVINGSTON

But you said it roamed in search of adventure?

PROFESSOR

(*A bit on his dignity*)

Romance lies in the field of the emotions: I am a scientist.

LIVINGSTON

What I mean is: was she faithful to one or promiscuous?

PROFESSOR

(*Embarrassed*)

Undoubtedly promiscuous.

LIVINGSTON

Of course.—You see, Bess, the lady existed before man made his conventions.

PROFESSOR

Yes. She could follow all her natural instincts.

LIVINGSTON

Which were?

PROFESSOR

Food and fighting. You will observe her large maw and small brain. Her main weapon of defense was her long powerfully muscled tail. From the teeth, we deduce she was mainly herbivorous.

LIVINGSTON

What did she feed on?

PROFESSOR

Everything she could pick up.

LIVINGSTON

(*Significantly*)

Think of that, Hood—"everything she could pick up."

PROFESSOR

Young weeds, tender grass and the like.

LIVINGSTON

Young weeds—ah, yes, of course. Yet in spite of her diet, there is something quite impressive about dead things, isn't there?

PROFESSOR

(*Eyeing it*)

They have a dynamic power.

LIVINGSTON

Exactly. You see, Mr. Hood, a dead tree, that has in its time given shelter and substance, fights to be left standing. It resists the alien ax. Its roots go as deep as when they flowed with sap. They also fight to prevent themselves from being torn up. They don't like to be disturbed—any more than this animal did in its cold clayey comfort. (*To* PROFESSOR) You say it took seven years?

PROFESSOR

(*Not understanding*)

Yes. We were afraid of hurting it if we were careless.

LIVINGSTON

You were right to be careful: one shouldn't hurt the dead. What is its scientific significance?

PROFESSOR

Nothing but a further proof of the slow processes of evolution.

LIVINGSTON

(*With a smile*)

I am a utilitarian. I see another significance. Possibly she was dug up, a thousand centuries after she died, just to give *you* an occupation.

PROFESSOR

I can't accept that as a working hypothesis.

LIVINGSTON

Just think, Hood. Several million years dead! There it stands for man to look upon! Possibly that was *why* it existed, after all: for us *three* to look upon. (*He glances pointedly at them.*) Mr. Hood is thinking of introducing a bill in the Legislature to increase the wings of the Museum.

PROFESSOR

That's very kind of him. We have many boxes still unpacked in the cellar for lack of room. But, unfortunately, this museum is under the control of the city, not the state.

LIVINGSTON

(*Smiling at* HOOD)

Indeed?

BESS

(*Rising impatiently*)

It's getting late.

LARRY
(*Re-entering*)
I only counted sixty-three.

PROFESSOR
(*Emphatically*)
But there are ninety-seven.

LARRY
All right. I won't argue it.

PROFESSOR
If you'll come with me, I'll show you the Tyrannosaurus. They were carnivorous and the greatest fighters of them all.

LARRY
Say, this is a fine place to be showing a fellow who's just back from France.

BESS
(*Sweetly*)
Young man, I'd like to shake your hand. I see you have all sorts of lovely decorations. May I ask how you got them?

LARRY
(*Embarrassed*)
Oh, I was careless and they pinned a rose on me by mistake.

BESS

You must be very proud of them?

LARRY

Sure I am. (*Looking at the* BRONTOSAURUS.) But that lizard kinder takes the pride out of a fellow.

BESS

But *I* admire bravery—whenever I see it. I'd like to hear about how you really got those decorations.

LARRY

Would you?

(*The gong in the distance rings.*)

PROFESSOR

(*In back*)

If you want to see the Tyrannosaurus before we close . . .

LARRY

Oh, all right. (*To others*) Gee, I'll be glad to get out among the live ones.

BESS

(*Smiling at him*)

So will I.

LIVINGSTON

(*Coldly*)

You should have gone to the Follies, young man.

LARRY

Oh, I might have sprained an ankle going to my seat.

(*He goes out after the* PROFESSOR *as* BESS *looks after him.* SARAH *comes in back and then goes off. The rear of room darkens, indicating she has pulled the curtain up.* LIVINGSTON *glances at* HOOD *who is gazing at* BESS *with a strange enlightenment.*)

LIVINGSTON

I think you're right, Bess: we'd better be going. We might stop and take the children for a spin before it's dark.

BESS

Yes.

LIVINGSTON

(*To* HOOD)

Are you going *our* way?

HOOD

No.

BESS

You're sure we can't drop you somewhere?

HOOD

No. Thank you.

LIVINGSTON

I'm delighted to have met you, Mr. Hood. (*Shaking hands.*) I shall follow your work in the Legislature with great interest.

HOOD

Perhaps I may be able to help you with *your* museum.

LIVINGSTON

Just talking to you has encouraged me greatly. Good-bye. There is a big political future waiting a young man these days—if he keeps his head.

BESS

(*Shaking his hand*)

I'm sure my husband is right.

HOOD

(*Looking at her*)

So am I. Quite sure.

(*She turns away, as she sees what his tone of finality implies, and looks up at the* BRONTOSAURUS *with a start.*)

LIVINGSTON

What is it, dear?

BESS

Nothing. Only it seems to be smiling at us.

LIVINGSTON

All skulls grin: it's the eternal laughter of the dead.

BESS

Come. (*As she starts.*) Dear, don't you think it might be a good idea to rescue that fine strong good-looking young soldier? He must be so lonely and we might take him for a drive.

LIVINGSTON

(*A bit wearily at what he sees ahead*)

Oh, yes; if you wish. But I'm sure he should have gone to the Follies.

(*He offers her his arm—she takes it.* HOOD *watches them as they walk out without turning back. He stands there a moment, with a cynical smile creeping over his lips. He throws the catalogue on the seat. Then he goes to the sign before the* BRONTOSAURUS.)

HOOD

(*Reading and thinking*)

"Mainly Herbivorous." "Anything she can pick up." "Several million years" . . .

(*As he gazes there,* SARAH *enters and goes out to pull up the other curtain. She apparently does so for some red rays slowly gather about the fossil. The room is darker. She re-enters and stands there looking at him.* HOOD *gives a sigh of relief, and determination: he puts on his hat, and, with hands in his pockets, goes off whistling.*

SARAH *stands there as the room darkens. Then she goes over near the seat and begins to mop.*)

SARAH

Moppin' and scrubbin' . . . moppin' . . .

(*She pauses and gives a glance at the* BRONTOSAURUS *on whose skull are now centered the rays of the setting sun.*)

Holy Mother of Saints! What are you grinnin' at, ye dirty heathen?

(*She lifts her arm again in revolt as though to throw the mop at it. Then she puts it down with a sense of futility. She picks up her things and goes off slowly.*

The place is now dark save for the faint light on the skull; and even that fades after a little while.)

[CURTAIN]

TIDES

THE PEOPLE

WILLIAM WHITE, *a famous Internationalist.*
HILDA, *his wife.*
WALLACE, *their son.*

SCENE

At the Whites; spring, 1917.

TIDES*

A SIMPLY furnished study. The walls are lined with bookshelves, indicating, by their improvised quality, that they have been increased as occasion demanded. On these are stacked, in addition to the books themselves, many files of papers, magazines and "reports." The large work-table, upon which rests a double student lamp and a telephone, is conspicuous. A leather couch with pillows is opposite, pointing towards a doorway which leads into the living-room. There is also a doorway in back, which apparently opens on the hallway beyond. The room is comfortable in spite of its general disorder: it is essentially the work-shop of a busy man of public affairs. The strong sunlight of a spring day comes in through the window, flooding the table.

WILLIAM WHITE *is standing by the window, smoking a pipe. He is about fifty, of striking appearance: the visual incarnation of the popular conception of a leader of men. There is authority and strength in the lines of his face; his whole personality is commanding; his voice has all the modulations of a well-trained orator; his gestures are sweeping—for, even in private conversation, he is habitually conscious of an audience.*

* Copyright by George Middleton. See back of title page.

Otherwise, he is simple and engaging, with some indication of his humble origin.

On the sofa opposite, with a letter in her hand, HILDA WHITE, *his wife, is seated. She is somewhat younger in fact, though in appearance she is as one who has been worn a bit by the struggle of many years. Her manner contrasts with her husband's: her inheritance of delicate refinement is ever present in her soft voice and gentle gesture. Yet she, too, suggests strength—the sort which will endure all for a fixed intention.*

It is obvious throughout that she and her husband have been happy comrades in their life together and that a deep fundamental bond has united them in spite of the different social spheres from which each has sprung.

WHITE

(*Seeing she has paused*)

Go on, dear; go on. Let's hear all of it.

HILDA

Oh, what's the use, Will? You know how differently he feels about the war.

WHITE

(*With quiet sarcasm*)

But it's been so many years since your respectable brother has honored me even with the slightest allusion . . .

HILDA

If you care for what he says—(*Continuing to read the letter*)—" Remember, Hilda, you are an American.

I don't suppose your husband considers that an honor; but I do."

WHITE
(*Interrupting*)

And what kind of an American has he been in times of peace? He's wrung forty per cent profit out of his factory and fought every effort of the workers to organize. Ah, these smug hypocrites!

HILDA
(*Reading*)

" His violent opposition to America going in has been disgrace enough——"

WHITE

But his war profits were all right. Oh, yes.

HILDA

Let me finish, dear, since you want it. (*Reading*) "—been disgrace enough. But now that we're in, I'm writing in the faint hope, if you are not too much under his influence, that you will persuade him to keep his mouth shut. This country will tolerate no difference of opinion now. You radicals had better get on board the band wagon. It's prison or acceptance." (*She stops reading.*) He's right, dear. There will be nothing more intolerant than a so-called democracy at war.

WHITE

By God! It's superb! Silence for twenty years and now he writes his poor misguided sister for fear she will be further disgraced by her radical husband.

HILDA

We mustn't descend to his bitterness.

WHITE

No: I suppose I should resuscitate the forgotten doctrine of forgiving my enemies.

HILDA

He's not your enemy; he merely looks at it all differently.

WHITE

I was thinking of his calm contempt for me these twenty years—ever since you married me—"out of your class," as he called it.

HILDA

Oh, hush, Will. I've been so happy with you I can bear him no ill will. Besides, doesn't his attitude seem natural? You mustn't forget that no man in this country has fought his class more than you. That hurts—especially coming from an *acquired* relative.

WHITE

Yes; that aggravates the offense. And I'll tell you something you may not know: (*Bitterly*) Whenever

I've spoken against privilege and wealth it's been his pudgy, comfortable face I've shaken my fist at. He's been so damned comfortable all his life.

HILDA

(*She looks at him in surprise*)

Why, Will, you surely don't envy him his comfort, do you? I can't make you out. What's come over you these last weeks? You've always been above such personal bitterness; even when you were most condemned and ridiculed. If it were anybody but you I'd think you had done something you were ashamed of.

WHITE

What do you mean?

HILDA

Haven't you sometimes noticed that is what bitterness to another means: a failure within oneself? (*He goes over to chair and sits without answering.*) I can think of you beaten by outside things—that sort of failure we all meet; but somehow I can never think of you failing yourself. You've been so brave and self-reliant: you've fought so hard for the truth.

WHITE

(*Tapping letter*)

But he thinks *he* knows the truth, too.

HILDA

He's also an intense nature.

WHITE

(*Thoughtfully after a pause*)

Yet there is *some* truth in what he says.

HILDA

(*Smiling*)

But you didn't like it—coming from him?

WHITE

It will be different with you and me now that America's gone in.

HILDA

Yes. It will be harder for us here; for hate is always furthest from the trenches. But you and I are not the sort who would compromise to escape the persecution which is the resource of the non-combatant.

(*The phone rings: he looks at his watch.*)

WHITE

That's for me.

HILDA

Let me. (*She goes.*) It may be Wallace. (*At phone.*) Yes: this is 116 Chelsea. Long Distance? (*He starts as she says to him*) It must be our boy. (*At phone.*) Who? Oh—*Mr.* William White? Yes: he'll be here. (*She hangs up receiver.*) She'll ring when she gets the connection through.

WHITE

(*Turning away*)

It takes so long these days.

HILDA

Funny he didn't ask for me.

WHITE

What made you think it was Wallace?

HILDA

I took it for granted. He must be having a hard time at college with all the boys full of war fever.

WHITE

And a father with my record.

HILDA

He should be proud of the example. He has more than other boys to cling to these days when everybody is losing his head as the band plays and the flag is waved. He won't be carried away by it. He'll remember all we taught him. Ah, Will, when I think we now have conscription—as they have in Germany —I thank God every night our boy is too young for the draft.

WHITE

But when his time comes what will he do?

HILDA

(*Calmly*)

He will do it with courage.

WHITE

(*Referring to her brother's letter*)

Either prison or acceptance!

HILDA

I would rather have my son in prison than have him do what he felt was wrong. Wouldn't you?

WHITE

(*Evasively*)

We won't have to face that problem for two years.

HILDA

And when it comes—if he falters—I'll give him these notes of that wonderful speech you made at the International Conference in 1910. (*Picking it up.*) I was looking through it only this morning.

WHITE

(*Troubled*)

Oh, that speech.

HILDA

(*Glancing through it with enthusiasm*)

"All wars are imperialistic in origin. Do away with overseas investments, trade routes, private control of ammunition factories, secret diplomacy . . ."

WHITE

Don't you see that's all dead wood?

HILDA

(*Not heeding him*)

This part gave me new strength when I thought of Wallace. (*Reading with eloquence.*) "War will

stop when young men put Internationalism above Nationality, the law of God above the dictates of statesmen, the law of love above the law of hate, the law of self-sacrifice above the law of profit. There must be no boundaries in man's thought. Let the young men of the world once throw down their arms, let them once refuse to point their guns at human hearts, and all the boundaries of the world will melt away and peace will find a resting-place in the hearts of men!"

WHITE

(*Taking it from her*)

And I made you believe it! What silly prophets we radicals were. (*He tears it up.*) Mere scraps of paper, dear; scraps of paper, now.

HILDA

But it was the truth; it still *is* the truth.

WHITE

Hilda, there's something I want to talk over very very seriously with you. I've been putting it off.

HILDA

Yes, dear? (*The outer door is heard to bang.*) Listen: wasn't that the front door?

WHITE

Perhaps it's the maid?

HILDA

(*A bit nervously*)

No: she's upstairs. No one rang. Please see.

WHITE
(*Smiling*)

Now don't worry! It can't possibly be the Secret Service.

HILDA

One never knows in war times what to expect. I sometimes feel I am in a foreign country.

(WHITE *goes slowly to the door in back and opens it.* WALLACE, *their son, with valise in hand, is standing there, as though he had hesitated to enter.*

He is a fine clean-cut young fellow, with his father's physical endowment and his mother's spiritual intensity. The essential note he strikes is that of honesty. It is apparent he is under the pressure of a momentous decision which has brought him unexpectedly home from college.)

WHITE

Wallace!

WALLACE
(*Shaking hands*)

Hello! Dad.

HILDA

Wallace! My boy!

(WALLACE *drops valise and goes to his mother's arms.*)

WALLACE
(*With deep feeling*)

Mother!

WHITE
(*After a pause*)

Well, boy; this is unexpected. We were just talking of you.

WALLACE

Were you?

HILDA

I'm so glad to see you, so glad.

WALLACE

Yes . . yes . . but . . .

WHITE

There's nothing the matter?

HILDA

You've had trouble at college?

WALLACE

Not exactly. But I couldn't stand it there. I've left—for good.

WHITE

I was sure that would happen.

HILDA

Tell us. You know we'll understand.

WALLACE

Dad, if you don't mind, I'd like to talk it over with mother first.

WHITE

Of course, old fellow, that's right. She'll stand by you just as she's always stood by me—all these years. (*He kisses her.*) I . . I . . .

(*He smooths her hair gently, looking into her eyes as she smiles up at him.*)

We mustn't let this war hurt all we've had together —you and I——

HILDA

(*Smiling and turning towards her son*)

And Wallace.

WHITE

And Wallace. Yes. (WALLACE *looks away guiltily.*) Let me know when the phone comes.

(*He goes out hastily. She closes the door after him and then comes to* WALLACE, *who has sat down, indicating he is troubled.*)

HILDA

They made it hard for you at college?

WALLACE

I don't know how to tell you.

HILDA

I understand. The flag waving, the patriotic speeches, the billboards advertising the glory of war, the call of adventure offered to youth, the pressure of your friends—all made it hard for you to be called a slacker.

WALLACE

No, mother. I wasn't afraid of what they could call me. That was easy.

HILDA

(*Proudly*)

You are your father's son!

WALLACE

Mother, I can't stand the thought of killing, you know that. And I couldn't forget all you've told me. That's why I've had to think this out all these months alone; why I've hesitated longer than most fellows. The only thing I was really afraid of was being wrong. But now I know I'm right and I'm going clean through to the limit.

HILDA

As your father said I'll stand by you—whatever it is —if only you feel it's right.

WALLACE

Will you? Will you, mother? No matter what happens? (*She nods.*) I knew you would. (*Taking her hand.*) Then mother, listen. I've volunteered.

HILDA
(*Shocked*)

Volunteered!

WALLACE

Yes. I leave for training-camp to-night.

HILDA

To-night?

WALLACE

Yes, mother. Once I made up my mind I couldn't wait to be drafted. I wanted to offer myself. I didn't want to be made to go.

HILDA
(*Hardly grasping it*)

But you are too young.

WALLACE

I lied about my age. You and father can stop me if you tell the truth. That's why I've come back. I want you to promise you won't tell.

HILDA

You ask me to aid you in what I don't believe?

WALLACE

But you said you'd stick by me if *I* thought it was right.

HILDA

But . . .

WALLACE

(*With fervor*)

And I tell you, mother, I do feel it was right for America to go in. I see now we ought to have declared war when they crushed Belgium. Yes; we ought to have gone in when the Lusitania was sunk. But we've been patient. The President tried to keep us out of it until we *had* to go in to save our self-respect. We had to go in to show we were men of honor, not pussy cats. We had to go in to show the world the Stars and Stripes wasn't a dishrag on which the Germans could dry their bloody hands!

HILDA

(*Gazing at him incredulously*)

You hate them as much as that?

WALLACE

Hate? No, mother, no. (*As though questioning himself.*) I really haven't any hate for the German *people*. People are just people everywhere, I suppose, and they're tricked and fooled by their rotten government, as the President says.

HILDA

Then why fight them?

WALLACE

Because they're standing back of their government, doing what it says. And they've got to be licked to show them what kind of a government they have.

HILDA

At least you have no hate in your heart—that's something.

WALLACE

Oh, yes, I have, mother. But it isn't for the poor devils I've got to shoot. It's for the stay-at-home fellow here in America who sits in a comfortable arm-chair, who applauds patriotic sentiment, cheers the flag and does nothing for his country but hate and hate —while we fight for him. That's the fellow I'll hate all right when I sit in the trenches. And that's why I couldn't look myself in the face if I stayed out a day longer; why, I've got to go in; why, I'm going to die if I must, because *everybody* ought to be willing to die for what he believes.

HILDA

You are my son, *too!* For I would willingly have died if it could have kept us out of this war.

WALLACE

Yes. I am your son, too. And that's why you wouldn't respect me if I didn't go through.

HILDA

No. I wouldn't have respected you. But . . . but . . . (*She breaks a bit, then controls herself.*) You are quite sure you're doing what's right?

WALLACE

(*Tenderly*)

Would I have been willing to hurt you like this?

HILDA

(*Holding him close to her*)

My boy; my boy!

WALLACE

It'll be all right, mother.

HILDA

Ah, yes. It will be all right. Nothing matters in time: it's only the moments that hurt.

WALLACE

(*After a pause*)

Then you won't tell my real age, or interfere?

HILDA

I respect your right to decide your own life.

WALLACE

(*Joyed*)

Mother!

HILDA

I respect your dedication; your willingness to sacrifice for your beliefs. Why, Wallace, it would be a crime for me to stand in your way—even with my mother's love. (*He kisses her.*) Do it all as cleanly as you can. I'll hope and pray that you'll come back to me. (*Half breaking down and taking him in her arms.*) Oh, my boy; my boy. Let me hold you. You'll never know how hard it is for a mother.

WALLACE
(*Gently*)
But other mothers send their boys.

HILDA
Most of them believe in what their sons are fighting for. Mothers have *got* to believe in it; or else how could they stand the thought of bayonets stuck into the bodies they brought forth in their own blood? (*There is a pause till she controls herself.*) I'll help you get your things together.

WALLACE
And father?

HILDA
He will be angry.

WALLACE
But you will make him understand?

HILDA
I'll try. Yet you must be patient with him if he doesn't understand. Don't ever forget his long fight against all kinds of Prussianism when you hear him reviled by those who have always hated his radicalism and who, now, under the guise of patriotism, are trying to render him useless for further attacks on them after the war. He's been persecuted so by them —even back in the days when our press was praising Germany and our distinguished citizens were dining at

the Emperor's table. Don't forget all this, my boy. These days are hard for him—and me—harder perhaps than for you who go out to die in glory and praise. There are no flags for us, no music that stirs, no applause; but we too suffer in silence for what we believe. And it is only the strongest who can survive.—Now call your father.

WALLACE

(*Goes to door*)

Dad! (*He leaves door open and turns to his mother.*) I'll be getting my things together. (*There is a pause.* WHITE *enters.*) Dad, mother has something to ask you. (*He looks from father to mother.*) Thanks, little mother.

(*He kisses her and goes out taking the valise. His father and mother stand facing each other.*)

HILDA

Wallace has volunteered. (*He looks at her keenly.*) He has lied about his age. He wants us to let him go.

WHITE

Volunteered?

HILDA

Yes; he leaves to-night.

WHITE

(*After a pause*)

And what have *you* told him?

HILDA

That he must go.

WHITE

You can say that?

HILDA

It is the way he sees it.

WHITE

(*Going to her sympathetically*)

Hilda.

HILDA

(*Looking up at him tenderly*)

Oh, Will, do you remember when he was born? (*He soothes her.*) And all we nursed him through afterwards; and all we taught him; all we tried to show him about war. (*With a shrug of her shoulders.*) None of it has mattered.

WHITE

War is stronger than all that.

HILDA

So we mustn't blame him. You won't blame him?

WHITE

He fears I will?

HILDA

He has always feared you a little though he loves you deeply. You mustn't oppose him, dear. You won't?

WHITE

(*Wearily*)

Is there any use opposing anybody or anything these days?

HILDA

We must wait till the storm passes.

WHITE

That's never been my way.

HILDA

No. You've fought all your life. But now we must sit silent together and wait; wait for our boy to come back. Will, think of it; we are going to have a boy "over there," too.

WHITE

Hilda, hasn't it ever struck you that we may have been all wrong? (*She looks at him, as she holds his hand.*) What could these frail hands do? How could we poor little King Canutes halt this tide that has swept over the world? Isn't it better, after all, that men should fight themselves out; bring such desolation upon themselves that they will be forced to see the futility of war? May it not become so terrible that men—the workers, I mean—will throw down their

worn-out weapons of their own accord? Won't permanent peace come through bitter experience rather than talk—talk—talk?

HILDA

(*Touching the torn pages of his speech and smiling*)

Here is your answer to your own question.

WHITE

Oh, that was all theory. We're in now. You say yourself we can't oppose it. Isn't it better if we try to direct the current to our own ends rather than sink by trying to swim against it?

HILDA

Oh, yes; it would be easier for one who *could* compromise.

WHITE

But haven't we radicals been too intolerant of compromise?

HILDA

That has been *your* strength. And it is your strength I'm relying on now that Wallace . . . Shall I call him?

WHITE

(*Significantly*)

No; wait.

HILDA

(*Apprehensive at his turn*)

Oh, yes. Before he came you said there was something . . . ? (*The phone rings. They both look at it.*) That's for you.

WHITE

(*Not moving*)

Yes.

HILDA

(*Hardly believing his attitude*)

Is—is it private?

WHITE

No. Perhaps it will be easier this way. (*He hesitates, then goes to phone as she stands expectant.*) Yes. Yes. Long Distance? Washington? (*Her lips repeat the word.*) Yes. This is William White. Hello. Yes. Is this the Secretary speaking? Oh, I appreciate the honor of having you confirm it personally. Senator Bough is chairman? At *his* request? Ah, yes; war makes strange bedfellows. Yes. The passport and credentials? Oh, I'll be ready. Yes. Good-bye. (*He hangs up the receiver and looks at her.*)

HILDA

You, too!

WHITE

I've been trying to tell you these last weeks; but I couldn't somehow.

HILDA

You were ashamed?

WHITE

No, dear; only I knew it would hurt you.

HILDA

I'm not thinking of myself but of you. You are going to be part of this war?

WHITE

I'm going to do what I can to help finish it.

HILDA

By compromising with the beliefs of a lifetime?

WHITE

No, dear; not that. I've accepted the appointment on this commission because I'm going to accept facts.

HILDA

Have the facts of war changed or is it you?

WHITE

Neither has changed; but I'm going to act differently. I'm going to be part of it. Yes. I'm going to help direct the current.

HILDA

I can't believe what I am hearing. Is it you, William White, speaking? You who, for twenty years, have stood against *all* war!

WHITE

Yes.

HILDA

And now when the test comes you are going to lend yourself to it! You of all men!

WHITE

Hilda, dear; I didn't expect you to accept it easily; but I think I can make you see if you will let me.

HILDA

(*Poignantly*)

If I will *let* you! Why, Will, I must understand; I must.

WHITE

Perhaps it will be difficult at first—with your standards.

HILDA

But my standards were yours, Will. You gave them to me. You taught me. You took a young girl who loved you. You showed her the truth, and she followed you and has followed you gladly through hard years of struggle and poverty because of those ideals. And now you talk of *my* standards! Will, don't you see, I *must* understand?

WHITE

Dear, standards are relative things; they differ with circumstance.

HILDA

Have your ideals only been old clothes you change to suit the weather?

WHITE

It's the end we must keep in mind. *I* haven't changed or compromised one bit in that. I'm working in changed conditions, that's all; working with all my heart to do away with all war.

HILDA

By fighting one?

WHITE

(*With eloquence*)

Yes. Because it is necessary. I've come to see we can't argue war out of the world with words. We've got to beat it out of the world. It can't be done with our hands lifted up in prayer; it can only be done with iron hands crushing it down. War is the mood of the world. Well, I'm going to fight in my fashion. And when it is over I'm going to keep on fighting; for the next war will be greater than this. It will be economic revolution. It will be the war of capital and labor. And I mean to be ready.

HILDA

(*Listening incredulously*)

And to get ready you are willing to link arms now with Senator Bough—a man you once called the lackey

of Wall Street—a man who has always opposed every democratic principle . . .

WHITE

Yes. Don't you see the Government is beginning to realize they can't do without us? Don't you see my appointment is an acknowledgment of the rising tide of radicalism in the world? Don't you see, with the prestige that will come to me from this appointment, I will have greater power after the war; power to bring about the realization of all our dreams; power to demand—even at the Peace table itself, perhaps—that all wars must end?

HILDA

Do you actually believe you will have any power with your *own* people when you have compromised them for a temporary expediency?

WHITE

(*With a gesture*)

The leader must be wiser than the people who follow.

HILDA

So, contempt for your people is the first thing your new power has brought you! (*He makes a gesture of denial.*) You feel you are above them—not of them. Do you believe for a moment that Senator Bough has anything but contempt for you, too?

WHITE
(*Confidently*)

He needs me.

HILDA

Needs you? Don't you understand why he had you appointed on that committee? He wanted to get you out of the way.

WHITE

Isn't that an acknowledgment of my power?

HILDA

Yes. You're a great asset *now*. You're a "reformed" radical. Why, Will, he'll use you in the capitals of Europe to advertise his liberalism; just as the prohibitionist exhibits a reformed drunkard.

WHITE

And I tell you, Hilda, after the war I shall be stronger than he is, stronger than any of them.

HILDA

No man is strong unless he does what he feels is right. No, no, Will; you've convicted yourself with your own eloquence. You've wanted to do this for some reason. But it isn't the one you've told me. No; no.

WHITE
(*Angrily*)

You doubt my sincerity?

HILDA

No; only the way you have read yourself.

WHITE

Well, if you think I've tried to make it easy for myself you are mistaken. Is it easy to pull out of the rut and habit of years? Easy to know my friends will jeer and say I've sold out? Easy to have *you* misunderstand? (*Goes to her.*) Hilda, I'm doing this for their good. I'm doing it—just as Wallace is—because I feel it's right.

HILDA

No; you shouldn't say that. You are not doing this for the same reason Wallace is. He believes in this war. He has accepted it all simply without a question. If you had seen the look in his eyes, you would have known he was a dedicated spirit; there was no shadow, no doubt; it was pure flame. But you! You believe differently! You can't hush the mind that for twenty years has thought no war ever could henceforth be justified. You can't give yourself to this war without tricking yourself with phrases. You see power in it and profit for yourself. (*He protests.*) That's your own confession. You are only doing what is expedient —not what is right. Oh, Will, don't compare your motives with those of our son. I sent him forth, without a word of protest, because he wishes to die for his own ideals: you are killing your own ideals for the ideals of others! (*She turns away.*) Oh, Will, that's

what hurts. If you were only like him, I—I could stand it.

WHITE

(*Quietly, after a pause*)

I can't be angry at you—even when you say such things. You've been too much a part of my life, and work, and I love you, Hilda. You know that, don't you, dear? (*He sits beside her and takes her hand.*) I knew it would be difficult to make you understand. Only once have I lacked courage and that was when I felt myself being drawn into this and they offered me the appointment. For then I saw I must tell you. You know I never have wanted to cause you pain. But when you asked me to let Wallace go, I thought you would understand my going, too.—Oh, perhaps our motives are different; he is young: war has caught his imagination; but, I, too, see a duty, a way to accomplish my ideals.

HILDA

Let's leave ideals out of this now. It's like bitter enemies praying to the same God as they kill each other.

WHITE

Yes. War is full of ironies. I see that: Wallace can't. It's so full of mixed motives, good and bad. Yes. I'll grant all that. Only America has gone in. The whole tide was against us, dear. It is sweeping over the world: a brown tide of khaki sweeping every-

thing before it. All my life I've fought against the current. (*Wearily*) And now that I've gone in, too, my arms seem less tired. Yes; and except for the pain I've caused you, I've never in all my life felt so—so happy.

(*Then she understands. She slowly turns to him, with tenderness in her eyes.*)

HILDA

Oh, now, Will, I do understand. Now I see the real reason for what you've done.

WHITE

(*Defensively*)

I've given the real reason.

HILDA

(*Her heart going out to him*)

You poor tired man. My dear one. Forgive me, if I made it difficult for you; if I said cruel words. I ought to have guessed; ought to have seen what life has done to you. (*He looks up, not understanding her words.*) Those hands of yours first dug a living out of the ground. Then they built houses and grew strong because you were a workman—a man of the people. You saw injustice and all your life you fought against those who had the power to inflict it: the press; the comfortable respectables, like my brother; and even those of your own group who opposed you—you fought them all. And they look at you as an outsider, an alien in your own country. Oh, Will, I know how

hard it has been for you to be always on the defensive, against the majority. It is hard to live alone away from the herd. It does tire one to the bone and make one envious of the comfort and security they find by being together.

WHITE

Yes . . but . . .

HILDA

Now the war comes and with it a chance to get back; to be part of the majority; to be welcomed with open arms by those who have fought you; to go back with honor and praise. And, yes, to have the warmth and comfort of the crowd. That's the real reason you're going in. You're tired and worn out with the fight. I know. I understand now.

WHITE

(*Earnestly*)

If I thought it was that, I'd kill myself.

HILDA

There's been enough killing already. I have to understand it somehow to accept it at all.

(*He stares at her, wondering at her words. She smiles. He goes to a chair and sits down, gazing before him. The music of "Over There" is now heard outside in the street, approaching nearer and nearer. It is a military band.* WALLACE *excitedly rushes in dressed in khaki.*)

WALLACE

Mother, mother. The boys are coming down the street. (*Sees father.*) Dad! Mother has told you?

HILDA

(*Calmly*)

Yes; I've told him.

WALLACE

And you're going to let me go, Dad?

HILDA

Yes.

WALLACE

Oh, thanks, Dad. (*Grasping his hand.*) I knew mother would make you see. (*Music nearer.*) Listen! Isn't that a great tune? Lifts you up on your feet and carries you over there. Gee, it just gets into a fellow and makes him want to run for his gun and charge over the top. (*He goes to balcony.*) Look! They're nearing here; all ready to sail with the morning tide. They've got their helmets on. You can't see the end of them coming down the avenue. Oh, thank God, I'm going to be one of them soon. Thank God! I'm going to fight for Uncle Sam and the Stars and Stripes. (*Calls off.*) Hurrah! (*To them.*) Oh, I wish I had a flag. Why haven't we got a flag here—Hurrah!!

(*As he goes out on the balcony the music plays louder.* HILDA *has gone to* WHITE *during this,*

and stands behind him, with her arms down his arms, as he sits there, gazing before him.)

HILDA

(*Fervently*)

Oh, Will, if I could only feel it as he does!!

(*The music begins to trail off as* WHITE *tenderly takes hold of her hands.*)

[CURTAIN]

AMONG THE LIONS

THE PEOPLE

PATRICIA TENNER, *a popular "star."*
MRS. EMILY FROWDE, *"a lion-hunter."*
MISS EVA STANNARD, *about whom there has been talk.*
THE BROWN ONE,
THE BLUE ONE,
THE GREEN ONE,
} *as they appear to Patricia.*
M. MAVOSKY, *an artist "who's all the rage."*
GEORGE SILVERTON, *a musician; an old friend of Patricia.*
OTHER GUESTS.

SCENE

Drawing-room at Mrs. Frowde's during a small reception given to Patricia Tenner. A late afternoon.

AMONG THE LIONS*

AN elaborate drawing-room is disclosed, with bare high-paneled walls, relieved only by attractive candle-clusters and a stretch of tapestry. At back is an alcove effect in which a piano is seen, with the usual decorations of a music-room suggested beyond. There are two openings which lead to the hallways and street doors without. Opposite these is a stone-built fireplace with a smoldering log blaze and attractive "British Soldier" andirons. By this rests a deep chair which tones with the other furnishings. A tea-table, resplendent with silver, stands obliquely in the center, with lighted candles. Appropriate ferns and flowers rest in likely places.

GEORGE SILVERTON *is playing a Chopin étude in the music-room; about the opening are grouped* PATRICIA TENNER, MRS. FROWDE, THE BROWN ONE, THE GREEN ONE, THE BLUE ONE *and others. They are listening, duly impressed by the touch of an expert.*

MAVOSKY, *the artist, is standing off alone by the tea-table complacently munching a macaroon and eyeing* PATRICIA.

MAVOSKY *is about forty, tall, with large eyes and a pointed beard. There is a slight Russian accent in his speech and his manners have the studied spontaneity of*

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a professional foreigner exploiting a new field. As he continues to watch PATRICIA *with a cynical smile, she leaves the group unobserved by the others and moves towards the low, deep chair near the fireplace.*

PATRICIA *has the large features of a stage-beauty, which enhance her appearance before the footlights. Her hair is parted and coiled low on her neck. She is elegantly gowned, and carries a long, elaborate scarf which is hung across her back and held by each arm. She uses this continually to increase her instinctive plasticity. As she turns there is a serious expression upon her face, as though, for once she had been her true self.*

PATRICIA

(*Almost inaudibly*)

George Silverton. Poor George!

(*She seems to feel* MAVOSKY'S *eyes; but again mistress of herself, turns, and smiles invitingly. Then she drapes herself artistically in the chair.* MAVOSKY *comes with the plate of macaroons, which she declines with a pretty gesture. He replaces them on the table, and, seeing no one is watching, returns to her, speaking softly as the music continues.*)

MAVOSKY

Quel charme!

PATRICIA

The gown or the pose?

MAVOSKY

Mademoiselle Tenner, in *your* profession they are inseparable.

PATRICIA

We actresses belong only to each moment we act. It is *your* profession which fastens us as we should be in the memory of others.

MAVOSKY

Perhaps that is why my portraits please.

PATRICIA

(*Bantering charmingly*)

And you only take celebrities, Monsieur Mavosky.

MAVOSKY

I wish to go to posterity on the hem of their garments.

PATRICIA

(*Smiling*)

Some day *I* may wear a gown that pleases you, eh?

(*He starts to answer, but the music stops and the others applaud in perfect taste. He offers his hand in parting, as she seems to invite it.*)

MAVOSKY

Au revoir.

PATRICIA

(*With a fascinating smile*)

Déjà?

(*He bows far over her hand and their eyes meet with interest. As he turns away, while the others come into the room,* PATRICIA *gives a secret smile of satisfaction, as though she had obtained her intention. Then she sighs wearily, bored, as she glances at the others.*

MRS. FROWDE, *the hostess is about fifty, looking forty; rather large and as self-contained as possible in her loose black tea-gown. She is a nervous woman with an apparent seriousness in her social undertakings. Her eyes are continually criticizing and her hands correcting. She has a gracious voice, and towards* PATRICIA, *at least, a possessive protectiveness.*

THE BROWN ONE *has a good profile from her chin up, but otherwise, in spite of lacing, is stout. Her tan gown makes up in elegance what it lacks in outline.*

The clinging gown of THE BLUE ONE *accentuates the languid manner she affects. There is a satisfied, set smile upon her aquiline face and her voice maintains a gentle, persistent tremolo.*

THE GREEN ONE *is younger than the others and in general indefiniteness of bearing and appearance merely suggests money. Her olive-*

trimmed gown is very simple, but is caught by a conspicuous jade belt.

These, with the other guests who gradually depart, suggest the atmosphere of a conventional tea.)

OMNES

(*Enthusiastically to Silverton*)

How delightful! How wonderful!

(GEORGE SILVERTON *is medium-sized, in the late thirties, with a fine, sensitive face and short-cropped hair. He is retiring in manner and seems ill at ease in the present company. Towards* PATRICIA, *however, this disappears and it is evident he has known her well.*)

THE BROWN ONE

(*Shrugging her shoulders, and splashing each sentence with jerky gestures throughout.*)

He has such a *je-ne-sais-quoi.* Don't you think?

THE BLUE ONE

(*In a shocked tone*)

I'd hardly put it that way.

SILVERTON

(*To* THE BROWN ONE)

You compliment me.

MRS. FROWDE

Didn't Pachmann play that at the Philharmonic Friday?

THE GREEN ONE

How should I know?

MRS. FROWDE

I wish they'd announce what they play as an encore so I can recognize it.

THE BROWN ONE

We need a Chopin in this country. Do you compose, Mr. Silverton?

THE BLUE ONE

(*Who has come down to* PATRICIA)

It must be splendid to be a real artist, Miss Tenner, instead of just having money. *We* have to be so careful.

(PATRICIA *smiles and nods understandingly throughout.* SILVERTON, *apparently ill at ease, comes beside* PATRICIA *as* MAVOSKY *is speaking to* MRS. FROWDE *and the others at the table.*)

Oh, Mr. Silverton, your playing made me so—so—(*at a loss for words*) don't you know?

SILVERTON

(*Stiffly*)

Music is the only mental adventure in good and evil which some of us ever have.

THE BLUE ONE

How clever of you! I wonder if that's why I adore Tristan? You will come to my next Thursday and play for me? *I* need adventure. (*She laughs, tremulously*) I'll have some people there if I may tell them *you* are coming.

SILVERTON

(*Hiding his displeasure*)

Charmed.

THE BLUE ONE

(*To* PATRICIA)

You have a beastly rehearsal then, haven't you? So sorry.

(PATRICIA *smiles as though regretful, and the three continue talking.*)

MRS. FROWDE

(*By the table, shaking* MAVOSKY'S *hand*)

Must you go?

MAVOSKY

Only till luncheon Tuesday.

MRS. FROWDE

(*Aside to him*)

It was good of you to meet *her.*

MAVOSKY

(*Looking across to* PATRICIA)

Miss Tenner is a poem in pose.

THE BROWN ONE

(*Who has been manœuvering to be in his line of departure, as* MRS. FROWDE *turns to give* THE GREEN ONE *a cup of tea.*)

M. Mavosky, I've heard if you wait at Port Said you'll sooner or later meet everyone you know. Here, at Mrs. Frowde's, one only meets those one wishes, *n'est-ce pas?*

MAVOSKY

(*Gallantly*)

You American women!

THE BROWN ONE

I'll bring my husband to see your portraits. May I?

MAVOSKY

(*Bowing*)

You speak for his taste.

THE BROWN ONE

(*Pleased*)

He actually threatens to have one of me, and wishes the very best that can possibly be painted.

(*They exchange pleasantries, and as* MAVOSKY *passes out he glances towards* PATRICIA, *who has been watching him, while* SILVERTON *has engaged* THE BLUE ONE, *who by now has joined* THE GREEN ONE *and* THE BROWN ONE *and* MRS. FROWDE *at the table. They laugh as* SILVERTON *and* PATRICIA *find a chance to snatch a few words unheard.*)

SILVERTON

(*Referring to* THE BLUE ONE)

Who is she that I must pay for my tea by playing for her Thursday?

PATRICIA

(*Flippantly*)

Her name begins with T. Her husband owns *The Star*. It's been good to me. I call her The Blue One; I no longer remember names. People are color to me. See the stout one—like an overfed question mark? She seems brown all through. Have you heard her talk? With her (*imitating and shrugging shoulders*) "je-ne-sais-quois"? No one who is fat should speak French. And The Green One—ugh!—with the jade life-belt!

SILVERTON

(*Seriously*)

Pat, why do you still come to these stupid affairs?

PATRICIA

There are still things *I* may want, too.

SILVERTON

Mavosky?

PATRICIA

A portrait by him in my new rôle. Yes. Mrs. Frowde knew him. *Voilà.*

SILVERTON

I see: that's how you still get things.

PATRICIA

Mrs. Frowde is the greatest "lion-hunter" in captivity. She is happy to-day; she's caught three of us: a star, a painter, and a promising musician. That's why you're here, isn't it? (*He nods.*) You've finally decided to follow the advice I gave you when we first came East——

SILVERTON

Yes: how different it was then——

PATRICIA

(*Reminiscently*)

Yes—how different!

MRS. FROWDE

(*Gently restraining* THE BROWN ONE, *who has started towards* PATRICIA *and* SILVERTON)

I've heard they had quite a romance once.

THE BROWN ONE

How romantic! I wish my husband played a piano. (*They talk.*)

PATRICIA

(*Quietly to* SILVERTON)

Funny, George, while you were playing I was thinking of when I hadn't a job and you were copying for a

living. Your music actually made me want to throw off all my insincerities here just for once and see what would happen.

SILVERTON

They'd be shocked——

PATRICIA

And I'd be chilly.

SILVERTON

But *I* couldn't be of any use to you—*then.*

PATRICIA

No; my "art" wasn't big enough to succeed by itself alone. I had to play the game—get influence—(*He protests.*) Oh, I know myself, George; I was cruel to you and all the others. Some day, just to square myself in my own eyes, I'll tell people like these here about my life and how I have always used them to get what I wanted.

SILVERTON

(*Surprised*)

What is the matter, Pat? You're not yourself.

PATRICIA

(*Smiling*)

I'm having a rush of sincerity to my lips.

SILVERTON

(*Looking over toward the others*)

I wonder what *they* would say if it slipped out?

PATRICIA

Perhaps they'd say it was "temperament." I've affected it so much I actually believe I've got it.

MRS. FROWDE

(*Laughing with others*)

Mavosky is *so* clever; he said in America passion was only sentiment waving a red flag!

THE GREEN ONE

He told me art had no morals and I understood him. He's so subtle.

SILVERTON

(*To* PATRICIA)

If I could but make phrases.

PATRICIA

(*Rising, wearily*)

I don't have to; I smile them.

MRS. FROWDE

(*Coming down anxiously*)

Surely, you're not going yet, Patricia?

THE GREEN ONE

(*To* THE BROWN ONE)

She calls her Patricia!

MRS. FROWDE

(*Offering* PATRICIA *a cup*)

I've fixed it the way you like it—no lemon.

PATRICIA
(*Declining*)
You are so thoughtful, dear Emily.

THE GREEN ONE
(*To* THE BROWN ONE)
Emily!

THE BLUE ONE
(*Coming to* PATRICIA)
I'm just dying to see your Rosalind.

PATRICIA
(*Beautifully covering with an air of sincerity her mockery which* SILVERTON *alone detects*)
You may before you do.

THE GREEN ONE
(*In surprise*)
But the papers say——

PATRICIA
You mustn't believe all you see *there*. My press agent has imagination.

THE BLUE ONE
(*Cozily to the others*)
Isn't it splendid to be taken into her confidence.
(PATRICIA *darts a humorous glance at* SILVERTON.)

THE BROWN ONE

I should think you'd be tired going out so much.

PATRICIA

Mrs. Frowde's friends are always interesting and proper—a rare combination. (*Smiling.*) Her idea of a tragedy would be a social mishap—that way.

MRS. FROWDE

(*Protectively*)

I warn her against overtaxing herself—and with that trying part to play every night.

PATRICIA

Whenever it gets trying to me I think of the audience.

MRS. FROWDE

(*As the others laugh*)

I always said one must have a sense of humor off the stage to play the parts you do.

PATRICIA

I get my inspiration from my friends; a cup of tea, and brilliant conversation before the horrid time to go and "make up."

THE GREEN ONE

Doesn't all the make-up hurt the complexion?

PATRICIA

(*Sweetly*)

I always use cold cream first—don't you?

(*An abrupt halt in the laughter comes as* MISS EVA STANNARD *enters and pauses momentarily in the doorway.*

MISS STANNARD *is about twenty-nine, tall, vibrant and almost imperious in bearing. Her forehead is high, her eyes keen and her mouth thin and tense. She is gowned in gray.*

PATRICIA *is immediately interested in her and in the constrained attitude of the others.*

MISS STANNARD *slowly comes to* MRS. FROWDE, *bowing graciously, as she passes, to the others, who return it with sickly smiles, exchanging secret looks of surprise and indignation.* MRS. FROWDE *in her obvious embarrassment, instead of offering her hand, proffers the tea-cup, which* MISS STANNARD *smilingly declines.* THE BLUE ONE, *with rare presence of mind, coughs, and the others all laugh nervously, as though to cover the silence which has ensued.*

PATRICIA *slowly sits again, with* SILVERTON *standing by her chair, intensely interested and curious.*)

MISS STANNARD

(*Sweetly*)

I had no idea, Mrs. Frowde, you were receiving formally to-day.

MRS. FROWDE

(*Constrained throughout*)

I only sent out a few special cards to meet Miss Tenner. But now that you've come, let me present you to her. Miss Stannard.

PATRICIA

(*More cordial than ever*)

Miss *Eva* Stannard? (*Miss Stannard nods.*) Oh; I'm indeed glad to meet you.

MISS STANNARD

(*Formally and a bit puzzled*)

Thanks.

MRS. FROWDE

You know the others?

MISS STANNARD

(*Cordially*)

Oh, yes——

(*The others laugh a little nervously, nod mechanically, with ill-concealed rudeness.*)

MRS. FROWDE
(*Nervously*)

Do have another cup of tea. (*Pause.*) What lovely weather we are having! (*They all agree.*) I almost hate to go to Florida this winter; but it saves fuel.

(MISS STANNARD *declines again and* SILVERTON *takes the cup from* MRS. FROWDE *to the table, returning to* PATRICIA. *There is another embarrassing silence in which they all look at one another. Finally* THE BROWN ONE *comes to say good-bye to* MRS. FROWDE, *whose discomfort increases throughout.*)

Must you really go so soon?

THE BROWN ONE
(*Pointedly*)

Yes; I—I had expected to stay longer, but I've just remembered a most important engagement.

THE BLUE ONE

Can't I drop you on the way? My car's waiting.

MRS. FROWDE
(*Distressed*)

Must you, too? But Mr. Silverton has promised to play again.

SILVERTON
(*Significantly*)

An improvisation—prompted by the occasion.

THE BLUE ONE

I'm to hear it Thursday—remember.

(*As* THE BLUE ONE *and* THE BROWN ONE *say good-bye to* MISS STANNARD, THE GREEN ONE *goes to* MRS. FROWDE. MISS STANNARD *being left alone, shows her struggle at self-control and sits in a chair unasked.* THE BROWN ONE *and* THE BLUE ONE *with heads together go out the upper opening.*)

THE GREEN ONE

It's getting late. I've had such a pleasant afternoon. You won't forget bridge next Monday?

(MRS. FROWDE *responds limply and as* THE GREEN ONE *turns,* MISS STANNARD *rises and halts her with a look.*)

MISS STANNARD

Good afternoon.

MRS. FROWDE

Must you?

THE GREEN ONE

Yes, I'm going to Cartier's for the prizes. (*To* PATRICIA) Good afternoon. (*After a moment's hesitation.*) Good afternoon, Miss Stannard.

(THE GREEN ONE *goes out as* MISS STANNARD *eyes* MRS. FROWDE *in silence while* PATRICIA *and* SILVERTON *speak unheard.*)

PATRICIA

Leave me here alone, George: *this* is real. I've heard about her.

SILVERTON

What are you going to do?

PATRICIA

The cats! There's something inside me wants to speak. Run along. I'm feeling that rush of sincerity I spoke of.

SILVERTON

Mrs. Frowde, I leave only because—(*as* MISS STANNARD *catches his eye*) Miss Stannard, I'm sorry they did not wait for that improvisation. But I'm afraid they wouldn't have understood the *motif*.

(SILVERTON *goes out.* PATRICIA *leans forward watching the two, as* MRS. FROWDE *faces* MISS STANNARD. *There is an embarrassing pause.*)

MRS. FROWDE

Really, I don't know what to say. I hardly thought you would come—under the circumstances.

MISS STANNARD

(*Fencing carefully throughout*)

I'm dreadfully sorry. I did not know it was a select affair. I thought you were always at home to your friends.

MRS. FROWDE
(*Pointedly*)

Friends—yes.

MISS STANNARD
(*Sweetly*)

Then *I'm* forgiven?

MRS. FROWDE

I think you must have seen my friends did not remain after you arrived.

MISS STANNARD

I'm very sorry; but it is they you should criticize for being so frightfully inconsiderate of you. (*With a sudden firmness*) And now Mrs. Frowde, don't you think you owe me an explanation?

MRS. FROWDE
(*Controlling herself with difficulty*)

I feel a strong desire to give it, only I hardly think you would like me to speak before——

MISS STANNARD
(*Sarcastically*)

Strangers? The resentment was shown before Miss Tenner, why not the explanation?

PATRICIA
(*Appealing with the usual success to their intimacy.*)

Emily, dear, you forget you have already spoken to me of Miss Stannard. (MISS STANNARD *stiffens.*)

MRS. FROWDE

Wouldn't it be better if I simply asked you not to call again?

MISS STANNARD

(*With a note of challenge*)

I must insist that you tell me frankly the reason.

MRS. FROWDE

You insist?

MISS STANNARD

Yes.

MRS. FROWDE

(*Bluntly*)

There has been too much talk about you. Surely you must have realized your name is on every tongue. You know the world: women can't do what you have done. You must have been mad—and with a married man at that!

(PATRICIA *eyes her keenly.* MISS STANNARD *tosses her head defiantly; but as* MRS. FROWDE *eyes her piercingly she seems to lose all her control, begins to tremble, totters, clutching the back of a chair and finally sinks with an hysterical sob upon the sofa, burying her face in her hands. Her vanity-case rattles to the floor.* PATRICIA *rises instinctively to go to her but sits again as* MRS. FROWDE *motions her back and approaches* MISS STANNARD *less harshly.*)

I'm very sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you like this. Only one must protect one's self—one's friends. I couldn't have you come here. (*Slowly*) Oh, well, I'm sure you will see one must draw the line somewhere.

PATRICIA

(*Impressively*)

Yes, Emily, one must draw the line somewhere. Why didn't you begin with me?

(MRS. FROWDE *sits in astonishment as* PATRICIA *leans forward. There is a long pause till* MISS STANNARD *looks up slowly in wonder and curiosity.*)

I really don't see why you discriminate.

MRS. FROWDE

But——

PATRICIA

If you and your friends are so shocked by Miss Stannard's presence, why should you tolerate me? No one gives us stage people the right to privacy. Everybody makes it their business to retail our lives. We're public property; so surely you and your friends have heard my story, too. Now, really, haven't you?

MRS. FROWDE

(*Confused*)

Yes, but—my dear . . .

PATRICIA

And what have you heard about me? Let's see if it is correct. My name? It isn't my own. My real

one wouldn't look well on the advertising. Besides, my father hadn't given me any reason to be proud of it. My mother may have been a good soul if I had ever really known her. I've always thought I was an unwanted child: I hate children so myself. But mother couldn't have been the sort who'd drink with ease out of your frail tea-cups, and I'll warrant no amount of coaching would have kept the veneer from peeling when she spoke. I grew up somehow among "beer and skittles," as Trilby would say; didn't know what pictures and teas and things were till I came East. And do you know *how* I came? *He* seemed so handsome, too, in those days.

MRS. FROWDE

(*Moving uneasily as she sees a grim smile come to* MISS STANNARD)

But, dear, you were young and——

PATRICIA

Oh, I knew better; but I was bored—bored out there and I wanted a chance to live. We didn't get along very well—he and I; partly my fault. He couldn't be happy with a woman who also had a spark of creation tucked away in her soul. Then, besides, I had made up my mind I'd do something because I had to keep alive. I turned to the stage—most of us poor fools do. But I happened to have a way with me and a pair of shoulders that were proud of my face. (*Sarcastically.*) The critics called it personality. (*Quickly*) I wonder if you also know I lived in a five-dollar-a-week boarding-house with circus acrobats on the floor above, a sad

soprano in a closet next to mine and a smell of cooking all over so I wouldn't be lonely? (*Almost unconsciously her voice at times betrays an unexpected commonness.*) How I hated it! How I wanted these feathers and gilt! And every time I made up my face in that two-by-four part I had, I determined to succeed somehow—*anyhow*. I deserve every bit of success I've got, for I worked hard getting the burrs out of my speech and some grammar into it. (MRS. FROWDE *moves uncomfortably again.*) That's the truth. People suspected I had a brain and I had; but I wasn't wasting it on books—I was studying the hearts and souls of the sort of people I needed to get along. (*With increasing relish at the effect of her revelations.*) And I saw to succeed in my life I had to grow hard inside and soft out. So I affected my husky voice and my sad smile; sadness gave me a touch of mystery and encouraged curiosity. I knew I'd have to keep my face smooth, too; so I stopped feeling for others and thought only of myself. Suffering isn't good for the complexion. But I helped everybody in convenient ways, because I knew I could make them help me in greater. And as I began to get along I went out more to teas and the like so I could meet the people I could use.

MRS. FROWDE

But, my dear . . .

PATRICIA

Oh, I'm not ungrateful for their kindness, but I owe them nothing, for I repaid them, by letting them

do things for me. Yes, it flattered them to have me about and to say they knew me "intimately." I was a good asset to their affairs because I was a success. Then I picked up a lot of cant phrases about art and the like, so I could prattle; and I even signed articles which somebody else wrote lamenting the decline of the stage, when I knew in my heart I was glad things were as they were because I could make more money with a dramatized novel or a tailor-made part than in my much advertised and never intended appearance in Shakespeare. (*Acting as with apparent conviction.*) And back of this, life was calling me. So I did other things to get along. My eyes were open and so it seems were those of the world. It envied me my freedom because I was a success. All of us don't do it, but I did and it wasn't always for love. (MISS STANNARD'S *quick breath halts her for a moment; then she adds dramatically*) Yes, Mrs. Frowde, if you're going to draw the line somewhere at your teas, why don't you begin with me?

MRS. FROWDE
(*Floundering*)

But—but you forget, dear, you—you are a great creative artist.

PATRICIA

No, I don't. Everybody's tolerance of my whims, my moods, my morals would never let me forget it. But what has that to do with the right and wrong of it? That's what you are wondering, Miss Stannard.

(MISS STANNARD *gazes at her.*) I don't ask any less charity for myself because my "temperament" has made me live my life my own way; though I don't need charity now I'm on top. (*Surging along effectively.*) But why shouldn't you and your friends extend that same charity to the rest of the sinners? (PATRICIA *does not detect* MISS STANNARD'S *change of manner so intent is she in her own words.*) You give it to me because I am a creative artist. Everybody has a bit of the artist in them. Some of us use it to make bread; others use it to make trouble. All the nice sinners of the world have the creative spirit, too. Sin is the creating of the actual out of the imagined. It's falling over the fence in a desire to see what is on the other side. (*Consciously shaping her words and manner to a climax.*) But the more so are the sins one does for love. Love is the most creative of all impulses. If you forgive me because I'm an artist, as you say; if you can ask *me* to sit beside your lily-faced daughters and stubby-chinned sons; if you can kiss my lips—I, who have openly violated all your standards —why do you turn against this woman, who has done what she has for the noblest of motives—love—the love of a man?

MISS STANNARD

(*She has risen tensely and speaks with a biting bitterness*)

I suppose you meant very well, Miss Tenner; you said it just as though it were a scene in some play—with the proper emphasis and pause and nice phrases.

But believe me, Mrs. Frowde is right: we can't judge people by the same standards. (*Contemptuously*) There *is* a difference between you and me. *I* feel it myself. When I need forgiveness I shall only want it of my own class. (*Scornfully*) The tolerance of yours means nothing to me. (*Very quietly*) I am sorry, Mrs. Frowde. I'll not call again till he and I are married. Then, of course, it will be all right. Good-bye.

(MISS STANNARD *goes out quickly leaving* PATRICIA *dumb at her mis-reading of the situation.*

MRS. FROWDE, *who has been too confused throughout to speak, now vents her anger on* MISS STANNARD.)

MRS. FROWDE

The brazen hussy! You see what she is—to insult you so after your splendid defense of her!

PATRICIA

(*Slowly*)

She was right.

MRS. FROWDE

Not at all. She doesn't understand the difference with a lady of temperament.

PATRICIA

Temperament—oh, yes. (*She smiles sarcastically and then looks surprised at* MRS. FROWDE.) And *you* are not angry with me?

MRS. FROWDE

(*Affectionately*)

At *you,* my dear friend? Indeed not. I know you didn't mean *me.* And besides I would have understood you if you had.

PATRICIA

(*Eyeing her with undetected cynicism*)

Yes, yes. You would have understood.

MRS. FROWDE

(*Impulsively*)

Won't you stay and have a bite to eat with me—all alone? I can drive you to the theater.

PATRICIA

I have an interview.

MRS. FROWDE

(*As they walk to the door*)

Too bad they misquote so.

PATRICIA

Yes, isn't it? I've had such a dear afternoon.

MRS. FROWDE

(*Embracing her affectionately*)

And you'll come to lunch Tuesday?

PATRICIA

(*As though wishing to escape*)

No . . I . . .

MRS. FROWDE

(*Solicitously*)

But Mavosky will be here and he's taken quite fancy to you. Thinks you'd make a splendid study.

PATRICIA

(*Recalling*)

Mavosky! Oh, yes. I thought you said Wednesday; that's matinée day. Tuesday is all right.

MRS. FROWDE

Say at two?

PATRICIA

I may be a moment late.

MRS. FROWDE

We'll wait for you. (*As they are walking out*) I hope you'll forget what *she* said.

PATRICIA

Oh, Miss Stannard hasn't any temperament. And it does make a difference, doesn't it?

(*They go out leaving the room empty, with the candles on the table winking in their sockets.*)

[CURTAIN]

THE REASON

THE PEOPLE

LOCKSLEY RANDOLPH, *a retired merchant.*
PAULA, *his daughter.*
TOM SABINE, *his secretary.*
MARY SABINE, *his secretary's wife.*

SCENE

Sitting-room at the Randolph home in a suburb of the city; an early winter night.

THE REASON*

A HANDSOMELY furnished sitting-room, the general entrance of which from the floor below is at the right. Beyond this a broad window is seen as the moonlight faintly filters through the trees outside. Directly opposite, some smoldering logs betray a fireplace, near which is another door opening into PAULA'S *apartments. Large double doors in the center open into a hallway leading to library. A telephone is on a large writing-table, upon which a light, with a luxurious shade suspended above, casts a strong yellow glow. The furnishings show signs of tasteless wealth and are devoid of any feminine touch.*

SABINE *and* RANDOLPH *are bending over some documents.*

SABINE *is about thirty-three, clean-shaven with shrewd eyes and a conspicuously insinuating smile. The manner with which he feels for his words and his studied coolness suggest a deep and significant interest in the developments.*

RANDOLPH *is fifty, well-preserved and possessing the assurance of permanent prosperity: he is apparently without illusions as the lines about his slightly protruding eyes and thick lips indicate a dissipated life.*

Though the two men are obviously considerate, there

* Copyright by George Middleton. See back of title page.

is concealed an instinctive mistrust. They are silent a long while until RANDOLPH *looks up from the papers.*

SABINE

Anything else?

RANDOLPH

How long will those compilations since

SABINE

Same as the others.

RANDOLPH

A month each, eh? You've done . . . let's see . . .

SABINE

I've been your secretary for three months.

RANDOLPH

And you've been at these every evening—ever take? I took you in.

SABINE

I wouldn't put it that way.

RANDOLPH

You are sure you can still find all you need in my own library here?

SABINE

All I need—behind the closed doors.

RANDOLPH

(*Casually*)

I shall see that my orders not to disturb you are continued.

SABINE

I've noticed you never even come yourself.

RANDOLPH

I like to think of young genius being left alone.

SABINE

(*Mock seriously*)

And out of harm's way?

RANDOLPH

Exactly—at night. (*Half to himself.*) Another month will about finish it.

SABINE

(*Significantly*)

Mr. Randolph, you are paying rather high for——

RANDOLPH

(*Eyeing him quickly*)

For what?

SABINE

(*Turning the pages casually*)

Unremunerative work.

RANDOLPH

One never pays too high for what one wants.

SABINE

Not at the time.

(*They look at each other:* SABINE *slowly gathers the papers together and glances towards* RANDOLPH *who is coolly staring before him. There is a quiet pause. Then* SABINE *opens the library door and casually steps back.*)

Your daughter. (*Calmly to* PAULA) Your father is here, Miss Randolph.

(PAULA *enters with a book in hand. She is twenty-three and charming, with a sweet innocent air which suggests a hedged-in life. She is dressed in a simple tea-gown and her manner throughout is calm and unsophisticated.*)

PAULA

Good evening, Mr. Sabine.

RANDOLPH

Where have you been, Paula?

PAULA

Getting a book.

RANDOLPH

You mustn't read so much.

SABINE

Anything further, Mr. Randolph, before you go out?

RANDOLPH

No. But—but I don't remember mentioning that I was going out.

SABINE

I thought you did. Good evening.

PAULA

(*Good-naturedly*)

Is Mrs. Sabine well?

SABINE

Not exactly.

RANDOLPH

Indeed?

SABINE

(*Smiling*)

My wife seems upset about something.

RANDOLPH

(*Casually*)

Why, she seemed well when she was here last, didn't she, Paula?

PAULA

Yes, and so happy.

RANDOLPH

What's the trouble?

SABINE

I'm not quite sure—*yet.*

RANDOLPH

Perhaps she needs a change.

SABINE

I'll tell her you asked after her, Mr. Randolph.

RANDOLPH

Certainly. Do. But it was *Miss* Randolph who inquired.

SABINE

I thought it was you. (*He smiles.*) The air in the library has affected me. (*He smiles.*) Good evening.

(*He leaves the room, slowly closing the door. There is a pause as* PAULA *looks curiously before her, while* RANDOLPH, *somewhat puzzled, goes up to door and sees that* SABINE *has gone into the library beyond.*)

PAULA

I hope it's nothing serious.

RANDOLPH

What?

PAULA

Mrs. Sabine.

RANDOLPH

Nothing, of course.

PAULA

Hasn't she told *you?*

RANDOLPH

Me?

PAULA

You're such good friends.

RANDOLPH

My dear, women with attractive husbands never confide in outsiders.

PAULA

(*Innocently*)

Don't they?

RANDOLPH

(*Laughing*)

You know so little of life. (PAULA *sighs in agreement.*) And I wish you to keep your sweetness until you are married.

PAULA

Doesn't one need it then?

RANDOLPH

You'll understand when the time comes, child.

PAULA

(*Enigmatically*)

And one mustn't before!

RANDOLPH

Children don't realize how they unconsciously hold parents to higher things: it's because of you, for instance, more than anything else since your dear mother died, that I've tried to keep *my* life an example.

PAULA

I've always had it before me, father. (*Coming closer.*) I'm deeply grateful for showing me what I, too, should be.

RANDOLPH

Yes, yes. (*Patting her.*) Now, dear, run along to bed: your eyes are tired.

PAULA

(*Glancing at book*)

I'm fond of reading.

RANDOLPH

(*Humoring her throughout*)

What do you like best?

PAULA

(*Cheerfully*)

Adventure.

RANDOLPH

With real heroes?

PAULA

(*Referring to book*)

I love those who keep cool in times of danger.

RANDOLPH

You're only a child, after all, eh? (*He pats her tenderly as she notices him glancing at his watch.*)

PAULA

(*Casually*)

You *are* going out?

RANDOLPH

Yes: some business.

PAULA

Will you be late?

RANDOLPH

Do I disturb you?

PAULA

I can generally hear the machine from my room, before you turn up the path.

RANDOLPH

It's easy nowadays to go fast in the dark.

PAULA

You will always toot the horn? (*Reprovingly*) Think of the danger to others.

RANDOLPH

Foolish girl! There's no danger about here.

PAULA

No; of course not. (*Goes to him.*) Good night.

RANDOLPH

Dear, dear girl. (*Looking at her.*) It's good to have such a daughter.

PAULA

And such a father. (*They kiss; the telephone rings.*) Oh, let me. (*She goes to phone.*) Good evening, Mrs. Sabine. (RANDOLPH *starts a bit, unnoticed.*) I thought you were ill. Mr. Sabine was telling father. I believe he's in the library. Father will take the message: he's here. Do take care of yourself: just think what Mr. Sabine would do if you were ill. Good night.

(*She hands receiver to father, who half pauses, thinking she will leave the room; but she lingers over her book.*)

RANDOLPH

Good evening. (*Half pointedly*) Yes, my daughter is here. Anything I can do? Do you want my advice? Oh, whatever is wisest. Of course I'll

tell Mr. Sabine. I hope it's nothing serious. (*He hangs up receiver, concealing from* PAULA *his displeasure.*)

PAULA

She seemed excited.

RANDOLPH

Woman's nerves.

PAULA

Funny I never have them.

RANDOLPH

You're not married.

PAULA

You're going to see her?

RANDOLPH

She's on her way here.

PAULA

Here? Then you will tell Mr. Sabine she's coming?

RANDOLPH

Yes. But you're tired, dear.

PAULA

I'll feel better with my things off. Good night. (*She pauses at her door.*) Father; she and Mr. Sabine are happily married, aren't they?

RANDOLPH

Of course, of course.

PAULA

I'm glad to hear so.

RANDOLPH

Why?

PAULA

(*Glancing at him*)

Then it couldn't be about *that.*

(*She closes the door softly.* RANDOLPH *looks after her puzzled, then walks up and down alone very much irritated. He takes out his check book, glancing through the stubs cynically. Then he throws it back into the table drawer. Finally he picks up the phone, obviously switching it.*)

RANDOLPH

Is that you, Sabine? You've found what you want? You won't need me any more? Well, stick close to it. I just wished to see. Good night. (*He switches it off again and impatiently waits.*) Is that you, Brooks? Tell Toder to have the car ready. I may need it later. No, the closed car—it's chilly. Oh, by the way, (*trying to be casual*), in case *I* should be out, Mr. Sabine is expecting Mrs. Sabine. Let her come right up to the library. What's that? Better see who it is. (*Showing displeasure.*) I'll tell Mr. Sabine myself. Yes; if

you're sure it's Mrs. Sabine, better let her come up here. That'll be all for to-night.

(*He hangs up the receiver, walks up and down again and finally opens the hall door. There is quite a pause as he stands, smoking a cigarette, awaiting her. Finally,* MRS. SABINE *enters, leaving the door open.*

She is in her late twenties, of rather restless beauty, which under her shifting expression becomes hard and cynical. She apparently has little resistance and suggests a love of excitement and sensation. Her manner is flighty though worldly. She is handsomely dressed, with beautiful furs upon her sensuous shoulders.)

RANDOLPH
(*Abruptly*)

What the devil does this mean?

MRS. SABINE

We're alone?

RANDOLPH

Naturally.

MRS. SABINE
(*Half flippantly*)

I had to see you.

RANDOLPH

Why here?

MRS. SABINE

I couldn't wait till you came to me.

RANDOLPH

(*With strained jocularity*)

Feather brain; what's the trouble?

MRS. SABINE

Nothing—only my husband *knows*.

RANDOLPH

(*Quickly*)

About us?

MRS. SABINE

He's known for some time.

RANDOLPH

And he only spoke——?

MRS. SABINE

To-day.

RANDOLPH

The devil! (*Slowly*) What's the reason?

MRS. SABINE

Why he kept silent? (*Shrugging shoulders*) You men always have reasons.

RANDOLPH

What did he say?

MRS. SABINE

(*Laughing cynically*)

He smiled. It was so funny and so unexpected.

RANDOLPH

(*Incredulously*)

He didn't make a scene?

MRS. SABINE

No. And I'd been rehearsing for weeks what I should say.

RANDOLPH

But didn't he——?

MRS. SABINE

(*Bitterly*)

I tell you he didn't even insult me!

RANDOLPH

Sh!

(*He looks towards his daughter's room and then crosses and closes the door through which* MRS. SABINE *has entered.*)

MRS. SABINE

(*After she has watched him*)

Hasn't he spoken to you?

RANDOLPH

Not yet.

MRS. SABINE

That's like him. He said he'd wait till I broke the news to you.

RANDOLPH

And then?

MRS. SABINE

Then he said you would want to see him and (*ominously*) he'd do some talking.

RANDOLPH

(*Recalling*)

So that's why he smiled just now.—Didn't he say *anything?*

MRS. SABINE

He merely put his hands on your furs. I thought he'd believe I'd saved enough to buy them myself. He stroked them once or twice slowly—and smiled. But he *said* nothing. Then he led me to the window and pointed to your car—the extra one you forced upon *us*—when you began. He smiled; but he said nothing. He picked up a book: the work in the library was interesting; it kept him *safe* in the long winter evenings. I tell you he said it all in his smiles and never a word. (*Violently*) He disappointed me so! I'd be sorry for him a little if he'd only struck me. God! I hate men who only smile when they are angry. (RANDOLPH *trying to quiet her.*) Oh, I hate him with his penny a year. I hate him for asking me

to marry him, and then not even striking me when he found out what I was!

RANDOLPH

But didn't you even try to deny it?

MRS. SABINE

(*Defiantly*)

Why should I deny it?

RANDOLPH

(*Cynically*)

Of course not. Sooner or later, a woman always confesses to someone.

MRS. SABINE

(*Quickly*)

What did you want me to do? Think of you? I was sick of him. When I saw he wasn't going to make a fuss, I didn't think your well-known reputation would suffer; so I didn't care about protecting myself. What's the difference, anyhow? He can't give me what I want: you can. If we can only keep it quiet, nobody need know—and it wouldn't even reach your daughter's ears.

RANDOLPH

(*Angrily*)

We'll not discuss her.

MRS. SABINE

No. She's a good woman—with her lily hands and her thin eyebrows. What does she know of life: the

sordid soapy hours ending with the snore of a husband you hate. Ugh! (*He walks up and down, irritated.*) Well, then, what are we going to do to keep it from her?

RANDOLPH

That will depend on your husband and whether he'll be sensible. (*He goes to phone, switching it.*)

MRS. SABINE

(*Looking before her*)

You did it beautifully, Randolph; with such knowledge of me and my kind. But don't take too much credit. I'd have done it with *any* man who offered me what you did—if he'd come at the right time, as you did, and found me at the end of a trolley line like this.

RANDOLPH

(*At phone*)

Step here a moment, Sabine. Yes: your wife is here. (*Cynically*) She said you'd be expecting her. (*He hangs up the receiver.*) You could almost hear him smile.

MRS. SABINE

(*Without self-delusion*)

He couldn't hold me: he was too poor.

RANDOLPH

No: you're the sort that needs a diamond-studded clasp to keep her morals fastened on.

MRS. SABINE

And they're your specialty.

RANDOLPH

I think Sabine and I can make some arrangement.

MRS. SABINE

Let's be comfortable, that's all I say. I'm so tired of making my lies fit. I'm willing to keep on with it. Why not? It's all so easy with a woman once she's slipped. Lots of us would be what I am if they could find a man to go through the marriage ceremony with them *first.*

(*A knock is heard at the door—it seems almost sarcastic, as it waits for a reply.*)

RANDOLPH

Come in.

(*The door opens softly and* SABINE *enters slowly and comes down to them with the same smile. There is a pause.* MRS. SABINE *remains tense and seated.*)

Have a cigarette?

SABINE

(*They eye each other as they light up*)

Thanks.

RANDOLPH

(*Coming to the point*)

You know.

SABINE
(*Puffing throughout*)

Yes.

RANDOLPH

Well?

SABINE

I repeat the word—well?

RANDOLPH

You will come to an understanding?

SABINE

Which means?

RANDOLPH

You are—shall I say agreeable?

SABINE

You love my wife?

RANDOLPH
(*Courteously*)

Naturally.

SABINE

And you, Mary?

MRS. SABINE

Would a woman do what I've done without love?

SABINE

Never.

RANDOLPH

Well, say something.

SABINE

(*Calmly*)

It seems very simple.

RANDOLPH

Which means?

SABINE

That I'd still like to complete the compilations in your library.

MRS. SABINE

(*Rising, astonished*)

You're even willing to stay *here?*

RANDOLPH

(*Quickly*)

And live ostensibly at home—with your wife?

SABINE

(*Calmly*)

Why not? I have no place else to go and she merely wishes to be comfortable.

RANDOLPH

(*Relieved*)

You will not make a fuss?

SABINE

I'm sorry to disappoint my wife.

RANDOLPH

You will not let my daughter discover?

SABINE

No. I consider your position embarrassing enough.

RANDOLPH

(*Eyeing him*)

So your wife is worth nothing to you?

SABINE

(*Quickly*)

You're mistaken there.

MRS. SABINE

Thanks. But how?

SABINE

Protection.

MRS. SABINE

Against what?

SABINE

Against Mr. Randolph.

RANDOLPH

Me?

SABINE

Exactly.

RANDOLPH

What the devil are you driving at?

SABINE

Perhaps if I take it kindly now, you will not blame *me*—in the future.

MRS. SABINE

Oh, I know we'll get tired of each other if that's what you're suggesting.

SABINE

(*Detecting an agreeing look in* RANDOLPH'S *face*)

That *may* be what I mean. (*Eyeing* RANDOLPH *keenly as he sees her bite her lips.*) If that's all, I'll return to the library.

RANDOLPH

Have you no suggestions?

SABINE

(*Coldly*)

Be careful not to make a fool of me—in public.

MRS. SABINE

There speaks the man.

RANDOLPH

Then you'll be silent?

SABINE

Until——

RANDOLPH

Until?

SABINE

Until you get your deserts.

RANDOLPH

A threat?

SABINE

(*Smiling*)

No. Only I know my wife.

MRS. SABINE

And that's the sort of man I married. (*To* SABINE) Do you blame me for throwing you over?

SABINE

Have I?

MRS. SABINE

(*Indignantly*)

How dared you open me to this?

RANDOLPH

Don't blame him, Mary.

MRS. SABINE

(*Indignantly*)

You knew, and you let him steal your wife.

SABINE

Some men like their women that way.

MRS. SABINE

Isn't it funny! It's losing its romance—being handed over like some food at supper. Isn't it funny —and disappointing.

RANDOLPH

I can't say I admire you, Sabine.

SABINE

No, you can't. But you will when you know my wife better.

MRS. SABINE

(*Losing control*)

I'm more ashamed of you than I am of myself. Why didn't you stop me if you knew? What's the reason? Why didn't you strike me? Why didn't you, so I could feel you and I were quits? Why didn't you—like that and that. (*She strikes him furiously with her gloves once or twice, but he continues smiling.*)

RANDOLPH

Mary, don't let's have a scene. Sh!

MRS. SABINE

I wanted a scene! And to think I wasn't even worth insulting!

(*She goes out quickly, leaving the hall door open. She has dropped her glove and as* RAN-

DOLPH, *with a resigned, half-bored air, starts to follow her,* SABINE *stoops, picks up the glove and, smiling, halts* RANDOLPH.)

SABINE

My wife dropped her glove. Will you take it to her? I have my work, and, as you remarked, another month will about finish it.

RANDOLPH

(*Smiling in spite of himself*)

Life would be so much simpler if all husbands were so considerate.

SABINE

The spice would be gone.

RANDOLPH

I suppose she is waiting——

SABINE

—for the glove. (*Offering it to him.*)

RANDOLPH

(*Taking it*)

Yes: for her glove.

SABINE

I'm glad you will drive in the closed car.

RANDOLPH

(*At the door*)

Our reputations must be protected.

SABINE

No man likes to be made a fool of.

RANDOLPH

(*Slowly*)

After all, she's only a woman and they're all alike, eh?

SABINE

(*Slowly*)

All alike. Yes.

RANDOLPH

(*Casually*)

You'll find the cigarettes on the table.

SABINE

Thanks.

(RANDOLPH *goes out, closing the door.* SABINE *stands a moment, then turns to the window and looks off till he sees the car has driven away. He turns down the light and then crossing eagerly, he knocks on* PAULA'S *door. He repeats this.*)

Paula! Paula!!

(*He stands waiting.*)

[CURTAIN]

THE HOUSE

THE PEOPLE

CHARLES RAY, *a professor of philosophy.*
ELIZABETH, *his wife.*

SCENE

A room in an apartment hotel suite. One evening.

THE HOUSE*

PROFESSOR AND MRS. RAY are at the little table finishing their coffee. In the center there is a white-robed birthday cake with three golden candles sending a gentle light on them. A myriad of faint wrinkles on the PROFESSOR'S *kindly face might betray his age, though his thin body, in spite of its slight stoop, belies his seventy years. As he sits there precisely dressed in his evening clothes, he is the personification of fine breeding, the incarnation of all that blood and culture can produce. And through it all, there glows an alluring whimsy which one has no right to expect in a professor of philosophy.*

MRS. RAY, *gowned also for the ceremony they are celebrating, is ten years younger; soft and gentle, too, yet sadder somehow, as though, in spite of her effort to live in his enthusiasms, it has become a bit difficult to sustain his mood of happiness.*

But as they sip their coffee alone in the hotel suite with its conventional furnishings of a stereotyped comfort, graced only by a large bunch of white roses, one senses the deep and abiding affection which has warmed their long life together.

* Copyright by George Middleton. See back of title page.

PROFESSOR

(*With a sigh of contentment*)

Ah!

(*He sees she is thoughtful: he reaches over and takes from behind the table the quart bottle of champagne. He pours a little in her glass.*)

MRS. RAY

Oh, dear; I'm afraid I've had enough.

PROFESSOR

Nonsense.

MRS. RAY

But I'm beginning to feel it.

PROFESSOR

That's the intention. (*Filling his glass.*) There. Now a toast. (*Standing with the greatest gallantry.*) Here's to my comrade of forty years: may we have as many more together.

MRS. RAY

Oh, Charles, I'm afraid that's asking too much of Providence.

PROFESSOR

We should ask much and be satisfied with less.

MRS. RAY

(*Raising her glass*)

To my friend and husband.

PROFESSOR

You make a distinction?

MRS. RAY

The world does.

PROFESSOR

What is the world doing here on our wedding anniversary? (*Seriously*) Let's drink to each other—and the children.

MRS. RAY

(*Wistfully looking at the candles*)

And the children.

(*They sip: he shows he enjoys it; she sits thoughtfully while he takes out his cigarette case. He starts to take one, and then, with a twinkle in his eyes, offers her the case.*)

PROFESSOR

Cigarette, dear?

MRS. RAY

(*Smiling*)

No: thank you. I shan't begin at my time of life.

PROFESSOR

Cato learned Greek at eighty. The minute people cease to learn—even a vice—they have begun to grow old. So beware.

MRS. RAY

(*Striking a match*)

Let me light it for you.

PROFESSOR

(*Slyly*)

Which illustrates a woman's part in life: encouraging vice in men, eh? (*He lights it and puffs in enjoyment.*) I must say I like my idea about the cake and the candles.

MRS. RAY

It's lovely, dear. Who but you would have thought of having a birthday cake on our wedding anniversary.

PROFESSOR

I started to put forty candles: one for each year; but there was no room left for the cake.

MRS. RAY

I like the idea of three—just three.

PROFESSOR

Yes; three birthdays that meant so much in our time together: Teddy, Mary and Paul.

MRS. RAY

Forty years!

PROFESSOR

It's a long while to be married, dear. Speaks well for our patience, eh?

MRS. RAY

And not a word to-night from our three children.

PROFESSOR

(*Waving it aside*)

After all, our marriage didn't concern them—at the time.

MRS. RAY

And we never forget their anniversaries.

PROFESSOR

But think how important those have always been from the beginning: each one the start of a great adventure for us.

MRS. RAY

And more responsibility.

PROFESSOR

Certainly. Isn't that the way we have broadened our lives? Think, dear, of how many times we have been young—once with our own youth and three times with our candles.

MRS. RAY

(*She rises and goes to the roses which she inhales*)

And our hair is white.

PROFESSOR

(*Gallantly rising also*)

That can't be blamed on the children. White hair doesn't indicate marriage—always. It's a matter of pigment, I'm told, and affects bachelors equally.

MRS. RAY

You're right, of course, dear. We have kept young through having our children; only——

PROFESSOR

(*Coming to her*)

Only what? Surely there isn't a regret as you look back?

MRS. RAY

Oh, no, not regret; only so many of our dreams have never been realized.

PROFESSOR

(*As he breaks off a rose and gives it to her*)

But we have dreamed; that's the important thing, isn't it?

MRS. RAY

(*Looking at rose*)

I suppose so.

PROFESSOR

Of course it is, dear. And we have dreamed more than most because we have been young four times.

MRS. RAY

(*As she crosses to the sofa*)

But it's always been through others—for others.

PROFESSOR

But *now* it is for ourselves.

MRS. RAY
(*Smiling*)
You mean our house?

PROFESSOR
Yes. Now that they've retired me with a pension and our children no longer need our help, we can build our house.

MRS. RAY
(*Wearily, as she sits*)
We have built so many houses.

PROFESSOR
Yes. Life's an experiment. Remember the first little cottage where Teddy was born? It didn't leave us much margin even though it was small. Come to think of it, dear, we've built three houses, haven't we?

MRS. RAY
It's the fourth we've really thought of most—and that hasn't been built *yet.*

PROFESSOR
That's to be ours—all ours; with room for the children if they want to come back.

MRS. RAY
Oh, that's it: they won't come back now. Our house won't suit them.

PROFESSOR

(*Taking a chair over near her*)

How can we expect them to come into a house that isn't even built? You know our modern children are very peculiar. They get that from you.

MRS. RAY

Nonsense. It's you who are peculiar. Just look at the kind of house you want.

PROFESSOR

(*Doubtfully*)

It *is* different from yours, I'll admit.

MRS. RAY

I don't object to the architecture. It's the surroundings you insist on.

PROFESSOR

You want the city and I want the forest.

MRS. RAY

(*Shaking her head*)

We'll never agree.

PROFESSOR

(*As though with an inspiration*)

I have a solution. I'll live in your city house, if you'll have my forest around it.

MRS. RAY

I'm afraid, dear, that is a bit impractical at present prices.

PROFESSOR

(*With a whimsical smile*)

But we certainly can't have the city you love around my house in the woods! I'm afraid of the streets.

MRS. RAY

Any friendly policeman would help you across them.

PROFESSOR

Think of me walking arm in arm with a policeman! I must consider my reputation, even though I am seventy. No. (*With a twinkle.*) I can't seem to visualize the house, can you, dear?

MRS. RAY

It isn't like your dream or mine.

PROFESSOR

No. I'd have a hard time finding my birch trees in the moonlight. Have you ever noticed how lovely they are when the leaves have all gone?

MRS. RAY

Somehow they are no more lovely than the sense of life in the tall ugly buildings man has built with his own hands.

PROFESSOR

But trees are eternal.

MRS. RAY

That's where we differ. I live in to-day: you live in all time.

PROFESSOR

That's my profession. You lose count of time when you are a philosopher.

MRS. RAY

And I am a woman of the world.

PROFESSOR

(*As he goes to light another cigarette from the candles*)

I'd hardly describe you that way, my dear; that sounds so naughty.

MRS. RAY

I mean I love every minute that passes and everything the moment brings. I love the people who are of that moment.

PROFESSOR

You still dream of having a *salon* of celebrities?

MRS. RAY

(*Smiling*)

It's no worse than the museum of antiquities on your book shelves. But I keep forgetting you want your house in the forest so you can write about the dead.

PROFESSOR

And you want your house in the city for the living.

MRS. RAY

I wish we could compromise somehow.

PROFESSOR

If we only had more money I could do away with the wilderness and content myself with a few wooded acres, I suppose. Only it must be roomy where the winds can speak. And I must have some wild things about. Though perhaps I could compromise on a pet squirrel, if necessary. (*He smiles.*) And if I met you that far do you think you would be willing to live an hour or so from the city?

MRS. RAY

Why, of course. But haven't we been looking for that sort of place for years; even when we weren't free to live where we wished?

PROFESSOR

I can't see why money is always getting in the way of our dreams. I often wonder what scoundrel it was who first invented money.

MRS. RAY

And yet we might now be able to have what we wished if——

PROFESSOR

If? The eternal if?

MRS. RAY

(*She has gone to the table, placing rose there*)

I was thinking of all we gave up for our children.

PROFESSOR

Wasn't it jolly?

MRS. RAY

While we still dreamed of the house we two would build for ourselves.

PROFESSOR

With rooms for them, don't forget that.

MRS. RAY

And now where are our children?

PROFESSOR

Living—maybe dreaming a bit of our dreams and not knowing it is ours. That's the lovely thing about dreams: I like to think they are never lost.

MRS. RAY

Yet here we sit alone on our anniversary and they have forgotten.

PROFESSOR

The young have so many things to remember.

MRS. RAY

And we can *never* build our house now.

PROFESSOR

Nonsense. We can go on building it just as though it were really possible. Come, little mother, let's be

young together to the end. I'll have to throw another log on this make-believe open fire in *my* house. (*He pulls the sofa around so it faces the radiator which he eyes dubiously.*) Hm! That won't stimulate the imagination. Wait! I know.

(*He goes over to the table and smiling quaintly he lifts up the cake with its three burning candles and carefully places it on the low radiator. Then he presses a switch on wall nearby and the lights overhead go out, leaving only the candles, a desk lamp and the moonlight through the window to give the shadows life. He laughs and warms his hands before the candles as he would before a fire.*)

Come, dear, before my fire! By the way, is there a log fire in your dream-house, dear?

MRS. RAY

(*Smiling and fitting in with his fancy*)

If you are to be with me, of course.

PROFESSOR

Well then we have a blazing fire in both our houses, eh? (*He sits beside her on sofa and they gaze at candles.*) And how economical fuel is when you dream about it. I've got a whole forest waiting to be cut by me, to-morrow, after I've worked all morning on my new book.

MRS. RAY

And I've been to the musicale at the Biltmore.

PROFESSOR

What did you do this afternoon, dear?

MRS. RAY

(*Tapping his arm*)

Oh, I had a brilliant reception.

PROFESSOR

Receptions are always brilliant.

MRS. RAY

But this one really was. I had André Gidet and Arsène Tailleur there. They are those clever new writers all Paris is talking about.

PROFESSOR

You didn't enjoy their witticisms more than I did a pesky little bluejay that made fun of me as I fished in my emerald lake.

MRS. RAY

But surely even you would have envied me my dinner when the celebrated Mary Mevin explained her new symphony.

PROFESSOR

Nonsense, dear. Think of grilled trout caught by my own hand! And then the long lazy silent hours afterwards with Aristotle. Nice chap, Aristotle: knew a heap about men and things, though he lived in an age when there wasn't so much to remember as there

is now. Then afterwards I confess I yawned with the comfort of it all; good, deep-reaching yawns, as Nature intended. I went out to see my friends the stars. Best friends a man ever had: a bit cold and distant, perhaps; but always there behind the clouds. (*She has risen and gone to the candles. There is a pause. Then she snuffs them out.*) And I suppose at the same time you were trying in vain to find them out your city window? (*Sees she is sobbing very quietly: the candles are out.*) Why, dear! What's the trouble?

MRS. RAY

Oh, I can't pretend any more. Our log fire isn't real. Here we are all alone in a hotel apartment —before an old steam radiator and electric light. (*Presses the switch again.*)

PROFESSOR

(*Tenderly and seriously*)

I know. You left all that which might have been yours . . if . . . if you hadn't married me.

MRS. RAY

And you—without me and the children—you might have had your dream now.

PROFESSOR

(*Very seriously*)

No, dear. One never can realize them: that's why they are called dreams.

MRS. RAY

(*Goes to him looking up into his face*)

You know, I wouldn't have given up one hour of my life with you.

PROFESSOR

(*Stroking her hair tenderly*)

We have been very happy.

MRS. RAY

Yet why is there something we both feel we have missed?

PROFESSOR

Because even the happy must be incomplete or else they would cease to be happy. Isn't happiness hope as much as realization? We have realized—not ourselves completely—yet through each other. We have been what the other sought. But only the very wise know that there is an inner life no one can be part of: a lonely place where even the dearest can not enter, because it is a lonely place.

MRS. RAY

Yes. I think that is the way it is with me, dear.

PROFESSOR

And the way it is with our house we shall never build. We can't enter it *together.*

MRS. RAY

(*Looking before her*)

Yet I can still see my house.

PROFESSOR

As clearly as I do mine. (*Looking whimsically over at the smoking candles.*) Even though our own log fire is burned out.

MRS. RAY

(*Smiling*)

It's changed somewhat these forty years.

PROFESSOR

Yes. That's the way dream-houses have. (*Taking her hand.*) And, dear one, when we each think of our houses we can never build, let's—let's always go on holding each other's hand, eh?

MRS. RAY

Dearest . . .

PROFESSOR

So many people lose each other when they dream.

(*He kisses her tenderly.*)

[CURTAIN]

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